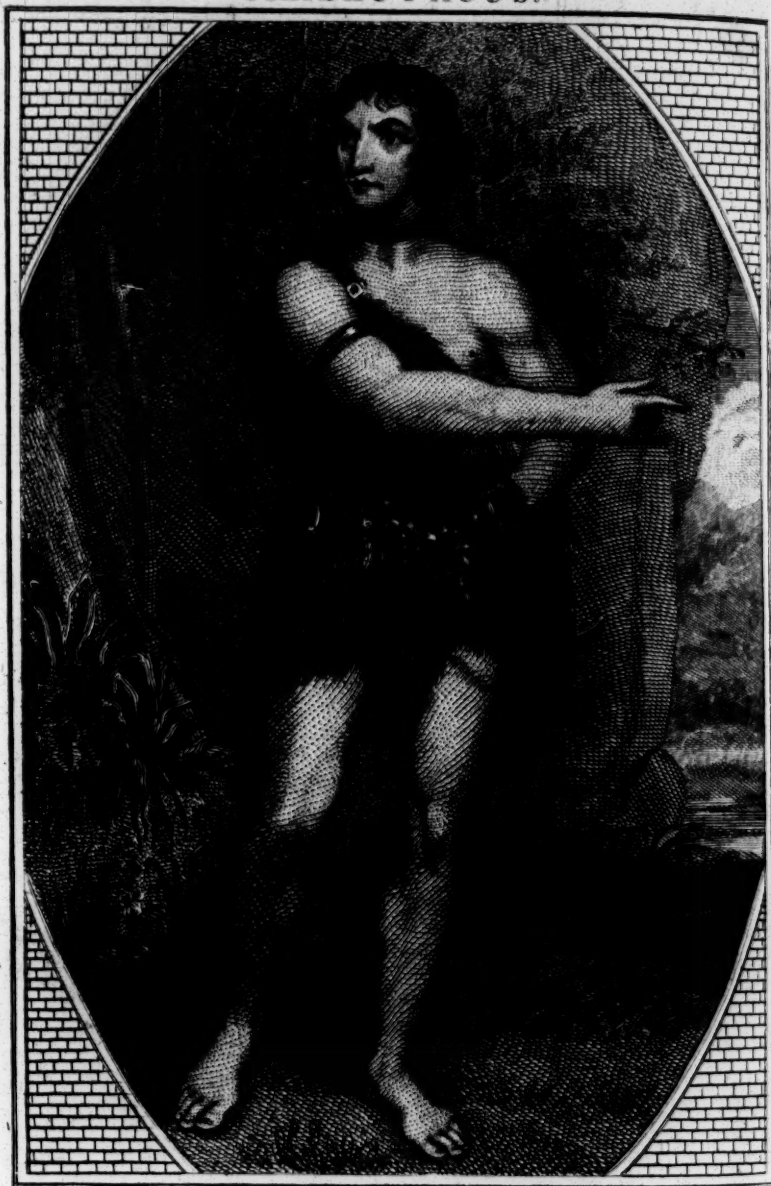


CHARACTACUS.



Graham pinet.

Harding sc.

MY CAULFIELD as ARVIRAGUS.

— That now at Snowden's foot
full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait
to call my sire their leader. —

London printed for G. Cawthorn, British Library, Strand, Oct. 29. 1793.

7 JU 52

CARACTACUS.

A
DRAMATIC POEM.

By WILLIAM MASON, A. M.

AUTHOR OF ELFRIDA.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,
By Permission of the Manager.

WRITTEN ON THE MODEL OF
THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

The Lines distinguished by single inverted Commas, are omitted in the representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

Printed for, and under the Direction of,
GEORGE CAWTHORN, British Library, STRAND.

M DCC XCVI.



LIFE OF WILLIAM MASON.

THIS gentleman is one of the few authors who is intitled to the applause of the world, as well for the virtues of his heart as for the excellence of his writings. He is the son of a clergyman who had the living of Hull, in Yorkshire, where our author was born about the year 1726. He was admitted of St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took his degrees of B. A. and M. A. and his poetical genius in the year 1747 procured him a fellowship in Pembroke-Hall, which, however, he did not obtain possession of without some litigation. In the year 1754, he entered into holy orders, and was patronized by the late Earl of Holderness, who procured him a Chaplainship to his Majesty, and gave him the valuable rectory of Aston, in Yorkshire, where he now chiefly resides, and which he has made a delightful retirement. He is also precentor at York. He married a young lady of a good family and amiable character, but of a consumptive constitution, which soon deprived him of her at Bristol Wells, as appears by her elegant epitaph in that cathedral. He was the publisher of his friend Mr. Gray's works, and the author of

1. *Elfrida*. D. P. 4to. 1752.

This was altered by Mr. Colman in 1772, without the author's consent, and performed at Covent-Garden; and again in 1776, by Mr. Mason himself, and acted on the same stage.

2. *Caractacus*. D. P. 4to. 1759.

This was altered by Mr. Mason himself in 1776, and performed at Covent-Garden.

Mr. Mason is said to have written a Masque called *Cupid and Psyche*; which has been set to music by Giardini, but not yet acted.

The commendations bestowed on Elfrida and Caractacus in their original form, have been seconded by an equal degree of applause since they were adapted to the stage. The first is perhaps the most finished, the second the most striking performance. The truth of history, in regard to the contested fair-one, has been violated. In respect to the hardy veteran it has been preserved. In the former the story is domestic, and we are interested only for the distress of Athelwold and his wife. In the latter, the events involve the fate of our own country, while wonder and pity are alternately engaged by the different situations of Caractacus, Eridurus, Arviragus, and Evelina. The conduct of Elfrid and her husband, being not untinctured with childishness and deceit, comparatively speaking, can operate but weakly on our compassion. The British heroes and heroine, being uniformly great and irreproachable, always command the attention they deserve. In the person of Athelwold, the betrayer of his prince's confidence is justly punished; but that event is communicated to us only through the cold medium of relation. By the future self-denials of his widow, we are as slightly moved, for these are to be ranked with voluntary penances, and do not take place till after the curtain has dropped on our expectations. In Caractacus the final destiny of the survivors is more natural, decisive, and satisfactory. When Elfrida takes leave of us, our thoughts will spontaneously turn on the difficulties attending the observance of her vow, a comic, yet an irresistible idea. But when the aged chief and his daughter are led away in chains from the dead body of a son and brother, our tears and admiration accompany their departure, while a pleasing hope suggests itself that Evelina will find a protector in the young Brigantian prince, and that her father's captivity will tend only to exalt the former greatness of his character. —The choruses in the first of these dramas, though highly ethic and poetical, lose somewhat of their weight, being pronounced by females without specific offices or characters. These ladies indeed appear to talk and sing, only because they have no other occupation. From the venerable sons of Mona, who are material agents throughout the second piece, the like effusions of fancy and instruction proceed with singular propriety. They are bards by profession, and the delivery of religious and moral truths is their

immediate province. At the same time we should add, that the lyric parts in *Elfrida* contain less objectionable passages than those in *Caractacus*. If they never rise to the sublimity that distinguishes the ode beginning

Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread?
they never descend into the almost burlesque strain of

—and sweep and swing

Above, below, around;

phrases which serve only to awaken a train of as mean and ludicrous ideas as Mr. Colman's threatened chorus of Grecian washerwomen could have excited.—The real beauties, however, of both these performances, so successfully predominate over every seeming imperfection they may betray, that on a review of what we have written, we scarcely think our remarks to the disadvantage of either deserve consideration.

In the closet, in particular, *Caractacus* must give ineffable delight to every mind capable of judgment, as it lays the strongest claim to immortality; and is one, among a few instances, that poetic genius is not in its decline in these realms.

TO THE
REVEREND MR. HURD.

ELEGY.

FRIEND of my youth, who, when the willing muse
Stream'd o'er my breast her warm poetic rays,
Saw'st the fresh seeds their vital powers diffuse,
And fed'st them with the fost'ring dew of praise!
Whate'er the produce of th' unthrifty soil,
The leaves, the flowers, the fruits, to thee belong:
The labourer earns the wages of his toil;
Who form'd the Poet, well may claim the song:
Yes, 'tis my pride to own, that, taught by thee,
My conscious soul superior flights essay'd;
Learnt from thy lore the Poet's dignity,
And spurn'd the hirelings of the rhyming trade.
Say, scenes of Science, say, thou haunted stream!
[For oft my muse-led steps didst thou behold]
How on thy banks I rifled every theme,
That fancy fabled in her age of gold.
How oft I cry'd, "O come, thou tragic Queen!
"March from thy Greece, with firm majestic tread!
"Such as when Athens saw thee fill her scene,
"When Sophocles thy choral graces led;
"Saw thy proud pall it's purple length devolve,
"Saw thee uplift the glitt'ring dagger high,
"Ponder with fixed brow thy deep resolve
"Prepar'd to strike, to triumph, and to die.
"Bring then to Britain's plain that choral throng,
"Display thy buskin'd pomp, thy golden lyre,
"Give her historic forms the soul of song,
"And mingle Attic art with Shakspeare's fire."
"Ah! what, fond boy, dost thou presume to claim?"
The Muse reply'd: "Mistaken suppliant, know,
"To light in Shakspeare's breast the dazzling flame
"Exhausted all Parnassus could bestow.

" True ; Art remains ; and, if from his bright page
 " Thy mimic power one vivid beam can seize,
 " Proceed ; and in that best of tasks engage,
 " Which tends at once to profit, and to please."
 She spake ; and Harewood's Towers spontaneous rose,
 Soft virgin-warblings eccho'd through the grove ;
 And fair Elfrida pour'd forth all her woes,
 The hapless pattern of connubial Love.
 More awful scenes old Mona next display'd ;
 Her caverns gloom'd, her forests wav'd on high,
 While flam'd within their consecrated shade
 The genius stern of British liberty.
 And see, my HURD ! to thee those scenes consign'd ;
 O ! take and stamp them with thy honour'd name.
 Around the page be friendship's chaplet twin'd ;
 And if they find the road to honest fame,
 Perchance the candour of some nobler age
 May praise the Bard, who bade gay Folly bear
 * Her cheap applauses to the busy stage,
 And leave him pensive Virtue's silent tear ;
 Chose too to consecrate his fav'rite strain
 To Him, who grac'd by ev'ry liberal art,
 That best might shine amid the learned train,
 Yet more excell'd in morals, and in heart :
 Whose equal mind could see vain fortune shower
 Her flimzy favours on the fawning crew,
 While in low Thurcaston's sequester'd bower
 She fixt him distant from Promotion's view :
 Yet, shelter'd there by calm Contentment's wing ;
 Pleas'd he could smile, and with sage Hooker's eye
 † " See from his mother earth God's blessings spring,
 " And eat his bread in peace and privacy."

March 20, 1759.

W. MASON.

* Nil equidem feci (tu scis hoc ipse) Theatris ;
 Musa nec in plausus ambitiosa mea est.

Ovid. Trist. lib. v. El. vii. 23.

† Part of a sentence in a letter of Hooker to Archbishop Whitgift. See his life in the *Biographia Britannica*.

Dramatis Personae.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

CARACTACUS, King of the Silures, - -	Mr. Clarke.
AULUS DIDIUS, the Roman General, -	Mr. Whitfield.
ARVIRAGUS, Son to Caractacus, - -	Mr. Lewis.
VELLINUS, } Sons to Cartismandua,	Mr. Ward.
ELIDURUS, } Queen of the Brigantes,	Mr. Wroughton.

Woman.

EVELINA, Daughter to Caractacus.	Mrs. Hartley.
----------------------------------	---------------

Persons of the Chorus.

MODRED, the Chief Druid, - -	Mr. Aickin.
MADOR*, the Chief Bard, - -	Mr. Hull,
SECOND BARD, - - - -	Mr. Leoni.
THIRD BARD, - - - -	Mrs. Kennedy.
FOURTH BARD, - - - -	Mr. Reinhold.

Scene, *The consecrated Grove in the Island of Mona, now Anglesea.*

* Those parts of the Odes which are distinguished by *double* inverted commas, are meant to be performed musically; the rest to be recited by the Chief Bard. The parts omitted in the Representation are distinguished by *single* inverted commas only.



CARACTACUS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

AULUS DIDIUS, *with Romans.*

Aulus Didius.

THIS is the secret centre of the isle :
Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of wonder
Gaze on the solemn scene ; behold yon oak,
How stern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms
Chills the pale plain beneath him : mark yon altar,
The dark stream brawling round its rugged base,
These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,
Skirted with unhewn stone : they awe my soul,
' As if the very genius of the place
' Himself appear'd, and with terrific tread
' Stalk'd thro' his drear domain. And yet, my friends,
' (If shapes like his be but the fancy's coinage)'
Surely there is a hidden power, that reigns
'Mid the lone majesty of untam'd nature,
Controuling sober reason ; tell me else,
Why do these haunts of barb'rous superstition
O'ercome me thus ? I scorn them, yet they awe me.
Call forth the British princes : in this gloom
I mean to school them to our enterprize.

SCENE II.

VELINUS, AULIUS DIDIUS, and ELIDURUS.

Ye pledges dear of Cartismandua's faith,
Approach! and to my uninstructed ear
Explain this scene of horror.

Elidurus. Daring Roman,
Thy footsteps press on consecrated ground :
These mighty piles of magic-planted rock,
Thus rang'd in mystic order, mark the place
Where but at times of holiest festival
The Druid leads his train.

Aul. Did. Where dwells the seer?

Vel. In yonder shaggy cave; on which the moon
Now sheds a side-long gleam. His brotherhood
Possess the neighbouring cliffs.

Aul. Did. Yet up the hill
Mine eye descries a distant range of caves,
Delv'd in the ridges of the craggy steep :
And this way still another.

Eli. On the left
Reside the sages skill'd in nature's lore :
' The changeful universe, its numbers, powers,
' Studios they measure, save when meditation
' Gives place to holy rites: then in the grove
' Each hath his rank and function.' Yonder grots
Are tenanted by bards, who nightly thence,
Rob'd in their flowing vests of innocent white,
Descend, with harps that glitter to the moon,
Hymning immortal strains. The spirits of air,
Of earth, of water, nay, of heav'n itself,
Do listen to their lay: ' and oft, 'tis said,
' In visible shapes dance they a magic round

‘To the high minstrelsy.’ Now, if thine eye
Be sated with the view, haste to thy ships;
And ply thine oars; for if the Druids learn
This bold intrusion, thou wilt find it hard
To foil their fury.

Aul. Did. Prince, I did not moor
My light-arm’d shallops on this dangerous strand,
To sooth a fruitless curiosity:
I come in quest of proud Caractacus;
Who, when our veterans put his troops to flight,
Found refuge here.

Eli. If here the monarch rests,
Presumptuous chief! thou might’st as well essay
To pluck him from yon stars: Earth’s ample range
Contains no surer refuge: underneath
The soil we tread, a hundred secret paths,
Scoop thro’ the living rock in winding maze,
Lead to as many caverns, dark, and deep:
’Mid which the hoary sages act their rites
Mysterious, rites of such strange potency,
As, done in open day, would dim the sun,
Tho’ thron’d in noontide brightness. In such dens
He may for life lie hid.

Aul. Did. We know the task
Most difficult: yet has thy royal mother
Furnish’d the means.

Eli. My mother say’st thou, Roman?

Aul. Did. In proof of that firm faith she lends to Rome,
She gave ye up her honour’s hostages.

Eli. She did: and we submit.

Aul. Did. To Rome we bear ye;
From your dear country bear ye; from your joys,
Your loves, your friendships, all your souls hold precious.

Eli. And dost thou taunt us, Roman, with our fate?

Aul. Did. No. Youth, by heav'n, I would avert that fate.
Wish ye for liberty?

Vel. and Eli. More than for life.

Aul. Did. And would do much to gain it?

Vel. Name the task.

Aul. Did. The task is easy. Haste ye to these Druids;
Tell them ye come, commission'd by your queen,
To seek the great Caractacus; 'and call
' His valour to her aid, against the legions,
' Which, led by our Ostorius, now assail
' Her frontiers.' The late treaty she has seal'd
Is yet unknown: and this her royal signet,
' Which more to mask our purpose was obtain'd,'
Shall be your pledge of faith. The eager king
Will gladly take the charge; and, he consenting,
What else remains, but to the Menai's shore
Ye lead his credulous step? there will we seize him;
Bear him to Rome, the substitute for you,
And give you back to freedom.

Vel. If the Druids——

Aul. Did. If they or he, prevent this artifice,
Then force must take its way: then flaming brands,
' And biting axes, wielded by our soldiers,'
Must level these thick shades; and so unlodge
The lurking savage.

Eli. Gods, shall Mona perish?

Aul. Did. Princes, her ev'ry trunk shall on the ground
Measure its magnitude; unless ere dawn,
Ye lure this untam'd lion to our toils.
Go then, and prosper; I shall to the ships,
And there expect his coming. Youths, remember,
He must to Rome to grace great Cæsar's triumph:
Cæsar and Fate demand him at your hands.

[*Exeunt Aulus Didius and Romans.*]

SCENE III.

ELIDURUS and VELLINUS.

Eli. And will heav'n suffer it? Will the just gods,
That tread yon spangled pavement o'er our heads,
Look from their sky and yield him? Will these Druids,
Their sage vicegerents, not call down the thunder;
'And will not instant its hot bolts be darted'
In such a righteous cause? Yes, good old king.
Yes, last of Britons, thou art heav'n's own pledge;
And shalt be such 'till death.

Vel. What means my brother,
Dost thou refuse the charge?

Eli. Dost thou accept it?

Vel. It gives us liberty.

Eli. It makes us traitors.

Gods, would Vellinus do a deed of baseness?

Vel. Will Elidurus scorn the proffer'd boon
Of freedom?

Eli. Yes, when such its guilty price,
Brother, I spurn it.

Vel. Go then, foolish boy!
I'll do the deed myself.

Eli. It shall not be:
I will proclaim the fraud.

Vel. Wilt thou? 'tis well.
Hie to yon cave; call loudly on the Druid;
And bid him drag to ignominious death
The partner of thy blood. 'Yet hope not thou
'To 'scape; for thou didst join my impious steps:
'Therefore his wrath shall curse thee: thou shalt live;
'Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,
'All rights of nature cancell'd.'

Eli. O my Vellinus !

Rend not my soul : by heav'n thou know'st I love thee,
As fervently as brother e'er lov'd brother :
And, loving thee, I thought I lov'd mine honour.
Ah ! do not wake, dear youth, in this true breast
So fierce a conflict.

Vel. Honour's voice commands

Thou shouldst obey thy mother, and thy queen.
Honour and sage religion both conspire
To bid thee save these consecrated groves
From Roman devastation.

Eli. Horrid thought !

Hence let us haste, ev'n to the furthest nook
Of this wide isle ; nor view the sacrilege.

Vel. No, let us stay, and by our prosperous art
Prevent the sacrilege. Mark me, my brother,
More years, and more experience have matur'd
My sober thought ; I will convince thy youth,
That this our deed has ev'ry honest sanction
Cool reason may demand.

Eli. To Rome with reason :

Try if 'twill bring her deluging ambition
Into the level course of right and justice ;
' Try if 'twill tame these insolent invaders ;
' Who thus, in savageness of conquest, claim
' Whom chance of war has spar'd. Do this, and prosper.'
But, pray thee, do not reason from my soul
Its inbred honesty : that holy flame,
Howe'er eclips'd by Rome's black influence
In vulgar minds, ought still to glow in ours.

Vel. Vain talker, leave me.

Eli. No, I will not leave thee :

I must not, dare not, in these perilous shades.
Think, if thy fraud should fail, these holy men,

How will their justice rend thy trait'rous limbs?
 If thou succeed'st, the fiercer pangs of conscience,
 How will they ever goad thy guilty soul?
 Mercy defend us! see, the awful Druids
 Are issuing from their caves: hear'st thou yon signal?
 Lo, on the instant all the mountain whitens
 With slow descending Bards. Retire, retire;
 This is the hour of sacrifice: to stay
 Is death.

Vel. I'll wait the closing of their rites
 In yonder vale: do thou, as likes thee best,
 Betray, or aid me.

Eli. To betray thee, youth,
 That love forbids; honour, alas! to aid thee. [Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.

*The Chorus, preceded by MODRED, the Chief Druid, descend
 to a solemn Symphony.*

MODRED.

Sleep and silence reign around;
 Not a night-breeze wakes to blow;
 Circle, sons, this holy ground;
 Circle close, in triple row:

CHORUS.

"Druid, at thy dread command,
 "When thou wav'st thy potent wand,
 "See, we pace this holy ground
 "With solemn footsteps soft and slow,
 "While Sleep and Silence reign around,
 "And not a night-breeze wakes to blow."

MODRED.

'Tis well. And now, if mask'd in vapors drear,
Any malign or earth-born Spirit dare
To hover round this consecrated space,
Haste with light spells the murkey foe to chace.

CHORUS.

"We lift our boughs of vervain blue,
"Dipt in cold September dew;
"And dash the moisture, chaste and clear,
"O'er the ground, and thro' the air."

MODRED.

Now the place is purg'd and pure. [*A short Symphony.*
Brethren! say, for this high hour,
Are the milk-white steers prepar'd?
Whose necks the rude yoke never scar'd,
To the furrow yet unbroke?
For such must bleed beneath yon oak.

CHORUS.

"Druid, these, in order meet,
"Are all prepar'd."

MODRED.

But tell me yet,
Cadwall! did thy step profound
Dive into the cavern deep,
Twice twelve fathom under ground,
Where our sage forefathers sleep?
Thence with reverence hast thou borne,
From the consecrated chest,
The golden sickle, scrip, and vest,
Whilom by old Belinus worn?

SECOND BARD.

“ Druid, these, in order meet,
“ Are all prepar’d.”

MODRED.

But tell me yet
From the grot of charms and spells,
Where our matron sister dwells,
Brennus ! has thy holy hand
Safely brought the Druid wand ;
And the potent adder-stone,
Gender’d ’fore th’ autumnal moon ?
‘ When in undulating twine,
‘ The foaming snakes prolific join ;
‘ When they hiss, and when they bear
‘ Their wond’rous egg aloof in air ;
‘ Thence, before to earth it fall,
‘ The Druid in his hallow’d pall,
‘ Receives the prize ;
‘ And instant flies,
‘ Follow’d by th’ envenom’d brood,
‘ ’Till he cross the crystal flood.’

THIRD BARD.

“ Druid, these, in order meet,
“ Are all prepar’d.”

MODRED.

Then all’s compleat.

[Symphony repeated.]

And now let nine of the selected band,
‘ Whose greener years befit such station best,’
With wary circuit pace around the grove ;

And guard each inlet; watchful lest the eye
Of busy curiosity profane
Pry on our rites: 'which now must be as close
'As done i'th very central womb of earth.
'Occasion claims it;' for Caractacus
This night demands admission to our train.
He, once our king, while aught his power avail'd
To save his country from the rod of tyrants;
That duty past, does wisely now retire
To end his days in secrecy and peace;
Druid with Druids, in this chief of groves,
Ev'n in the heart of Mona. See, he comes!
How awful is his port! mark him, my friends!
He looks, as doth the tower, whose nodding walls,
After the conflict of heav'n's angry bolts,
Frown with a dignity unmark'd before,
Ev'n in its prime of strength. Health to the king!

SCENE V.

CARACTACUS, EVELINA, MODRED, CHORUS.

Car. This holy place, methinks, doth this night wear
More than its wonted gloom: Druid, these groves
Have caught the dismal colouring of my soul,
'Changing their dark dun garbs to very sable,'
In pity to their guest. Hail, hallow'd oaks!
Hail, British born! who, last of British race,
Hold your primæval rights by nature's charter;
Not at the nod of Cæsar. Happy foresters,
Ye wave your bold heads 'mid the liberal air;
Nor ask, for privilege, a prætor's edict.

Ye with your tough and interwisted roots,
 Grasp the firm rocks ye sprung from ; and, erect
 In knotty hardihood, still proudly spread
 Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,
 Who, Roman-like, assails you. Tell me, Druid,
 Is it not better to be such as these,
 Than be the thing I am ?

Mod. To be the thing,
 Eternal wisdom wills, is ever best.

Car. But I am lost to that predestin'd use
 Eternal wisdom will'd, and fitly therefore
 May wish a change of being. I was born
 A king ; and Heav'n, who bade these warrior oaks
 Lift their green shields against the fiery sun,
 To fence their subject plain, did mean, that I
 Should, with as firm an arm, protect my people
 Against the pestilent glare of Rome's ambition.
 I fail'd ; and how I fail'd, thou know'st too well ;
 So does the babbling world : and therefore, Druid,
 I would be any thing save what I am.

Mod. See, to thy wish the holy rites prepar'd,
 Which, if heav'n frown not, consecrate thee Druid :
 ' See to the altar's base the victims led,
 ' From whose free-gushing blood ourself shall read
 ' Its high behests ; which if assenting found,
 ' These hands around thy chosen limbs shall wrap
 ' The vest of sanctity ; while at the act
 ' Yon white-rob'd Bards sweeping their solemn harps,
 ' Shall lift their choral warblings to the skies,
 ' And call the gods to witness.' Mean-while, Prince,
 Bethink thee well if aught on this vain earth
 Still holds too firm an union with thy soul,
 Estranging it from peace.

Car. I had a queen :

Bear with my weakness, Druid ! this tough breast
Must heave a sigh, for she is unreveng'd.

And can I taste true peace, she unreveng'd ?

So chaste, so lov'd a queen ? ah, Evelina !

Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm
That could not save thy mother.

Eve. To hang thus

Softens the pang of grief ; and the sweet thought,
That a fond father still supports his child,

Sheds, on my pensive mind, such soothing balm,

As doth the blessing of these pious seers,

When most they wish our welfare. Would to heav'n

A daughter's presence could as much avail,

To ease her father's woes, as his doth mine.

Car. Ever most gentle ! come unto my bosom :

Dear pattern of the precious prize I lost,

Lost, so inglorious lost ; my friends, these eyes

Did see her torn from my defenceless camp ;

Whilst I, hemm'd round by squadrons, could not save her :

My boy, still nearer to the darling pledge,

Beheld her shrieking in the ruffian's arm ;

Beheld, and fled.

Eve. Ah ! Sir, forbear to wound

My brother's fame ; he fled, but to recall

His scatter'd forces to pursue and save her.

Car. Daughter, he fled. Now by yon gracious moon,

That rising saw the deed, and instant hid

Her blushing face in twilight's dusky veil,

The flight was parricide.

Eve. Indeed, indeed,

I know him valiant ; and not doubt he fell

'Mid slaughter'd thousands of the haughty foe,

Victim to filial love. Arviragus,
 Thou hadst no sister near the bloody field,
 Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,
 Might find thy body ; wash with tears thy wounds ;
 And wipe them with her hair.

Mod. Peace, virgin, peace :
 Nor thou, sad prince, reply ; whate'er he is,
 Be he a captive, fugitive, or corse,
 He is what heav'n ordain'd : these holy groves
 Permit no exclamation 'gainst heav'n's will
 To violate their echoes. Patience, here,
 Her meek hands folded on her modest breast,
 In mute submission lifts th' adoring eye,
 Ev'n to the storm that wrecks her.

Eve. Holy Druid,
 If aught my erring tongue has said pollutes
 This sacred place, I from my soul abjure it.
 And will these lips bar with eternal silence,
 Rather than speak a word, or act a deed
 Unmeet for thy sage daughters ; blessing first
 This hallow'd hour, that takes me from the world,
 And joins me to their sober sisterhood.

Mod. 'Tis wisely said. See, prince, this prudent maid,
 Now, while the ruddy flame of sparkling youth
 Glows on her beauteous cheek, can quit the world
 Without a sigh, whilst thou——

Car. Would save my queen
 From a base ravisher ; would wish to plunge
 This falchion in his breast, and so avenge
 Insulted royalty. O holy men !
 Ye are the sons of piety and peace ;
 Ye never felt the sharp vindictive spur
 That goads the injur'd warrior ; ' the hot tide,

' That flushes crimson on the conscious cheek
' Of him, who burns for glory ;' else indeed
You much would pity me: would curse the fate
That coops me here inactive in your groves,
Robs me of hope, tells me this trusty steel
Must never cleave one Roman helm again,
Never avenge my queen, nor free my country.

Mod. 'Tis heav'n's high will——

Car. I know it, reverend fathers!

'Tis heav'n's high will that these poor aged eyes
Shall never more behold that virtuous woman,
To whom my youth was constant ; 'twas heav'n's will
To take her from me at that very hour,
When best her love might sooth me ; that black hour,
(May memory ever raze it from her records)
When all my squadrons fled, and left their king
Old and defenceless: him, who nine whole years
Had stemm'd all Rome with their firm phalanx: yes,
For nine whole years, my friends, I bravely led,
The valiant veterans, oft to victory,
Never till then to shame. Bear with me, Druid,
I've done: begin the rites.

Mod. O would to heav'n

A frame of mind, more fitted to these rites,
Possess thee, Prince! that resignation meek,
'That dove-ey'd Peace, handmaid of Sanctity,
Approach'd this altar with thee! Bards, bear off
The victims. No reply. A frame of mind,
More fitted to these rites, must Patience bring,
'To give them holy sanction. These instead,
See I not gaunt Revenge, ensanguin'd Slaughter,
And mad Ambition, clinging to thy soul,
Eager to snatch thee back to their domain,

Back to a vain and miserable world ;
 Whose misery, and vanity, tho' try'd,
 Thou still hold'st dearer than these solemn shades,
 Where Quiet reigns with Virtue? Try we yet
 What Holiness can do ; for much it can :
 Much is the potency of pious pray'r :
 And much the sacred influence convey'd
 By sage mysterious office ; when the soul,
 Snatch'd by the power of music from her cell
 Of fleshly thralldom, feels herself upborne
 On plumes of extasy, and boldly springs,
 'Mid swelling harmonies and pealing hymns,
 Up to the porch of heav'n. Strike, then, ye Bards !
 Strike all your strings symphonious ; wake a strain
 Which, as it echoes thro' yon vaulted cave,
 May penetrate, may purge, may purify,
 His yet unhallow'd bosom. To that cave,
 Monarch, retire, while hither we invoke
 The airy tribe, that on yon mountain dwell,
 Ev'n on majestic Snowdon : they, who never
 Deign visit mortal men, save on some cause
 Of highest import, but, sublimely shrin'd
 On its hoar top in domes of crystalline ice,
 Hold converse with those spirits that possess
 The sky's pure sapphire, nearest heav'n itself.

[*Exeunt Caractacus and Evelina.*]

SCENE VI.

MADOR, CHORUS.

ODE.

MADOR.

Mona on Snowdon calls :

CHORUS.

“ Hear, thou king of mountains, hear ;
“ Hark, she speaks from all her strings ;
“ Hark, her loudest echo rings ;
“ King of mountains, bend thine ear : ”

MODRED.

Send thy spirits, send them soon,
Now, when Midnight and the Moon
Meet upon thy front of snow :
See, their gold and ebon rod,
Where the sober sisters nod,
And greet in whispers sage and slow.
Snowdon mark ! 'tis Magic's hour ;
Now the mutter'd spell hath pow'r ;
Pow'r to rend thy ribs of rock,
And burst thy base with thunder's shock ;
But to thee no ruder spell
Shall Mona use, than those that dwell
In music's secret cells, and lie
Steep'd in the stream of harmony.

[*Symphony.*]

AIR *by the* SECOND BARD.

“ Snowdon, to thee no ruder spell
“ Shall Mona use, than those that dwell
“ In Music’s secret cells, and lie
“ Steep’d in the stream of Harmony.”

MADOR.

Snowdon has heard the strain :
Hark, amid the wond’ring grove
Other harpings answer clear,
Other voices meet our ear,
Pinions flutter, shadows move,
Busy murmurs hum around,
Rustling vestments brush the ground ;
Round, and round, and round they go,
Thro’ the twilight, thro’ the shade,
Mount the oak’s majestic head,
And gild the tufted missletoe.

[Symphony.]

[Symphony.]

DUET *by the* SECOND and THIRD BARD.

“ Welcome, welcome, gentle train,
“ Mona hails you to her plain :
“ Here, your genial dews dispense ;
“ Dews of Peace, and Innocence.
“ Banish hence each demon drear,
“ Fev’rish Rage, and chilling Fear,
“ Vengeance with his haggard
“ Envy, Hate, and Jealousy.”

MADOR.

Mona ! thy grove is Virtue’s throne ;
To Peace, to Piety alone.
Thy central Oak its shade extends ;

Here, melting in Devotion's fires,
 The soul, sublim'd, to heav'n aspires.
 Its dross subsides, its gold ascends.
 Pure, as this glitt'ring race of light
 That tend thy call from Snowdon's height;
 That here, arrang'd in order due,
 Spread their bright robes of saffron hue;
 So pure, so bright, thy sons shall shine,
 When life's delusive dream is o'er;
 Like them be crown'd with mistletoe divine,
 Like them in azure fields of æther soar.

FULL CHORUS.

"Mona! thy grove is Virtue's throne;
 "To Peace, to Piety alone
 "Thy central Oak its shade extends;
 "Here, melting in Devotion's fires,
 "The soul, sublim'd, to heav'n aspires,
 "Its dross subsides, its gold ascends."

ACT II. SCENE I.

CARACTACUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

Caractacus.

TRUST me, thou sire of Mona! All my soul
 Is now prepar'd. I feel as should the man
 Who, scorning what he was, who, what he is,
 Lamenting, rests all future hopes of peace
 On what thy rites shall make him. Holy Druid,
 Recall thy word; give signal for those rites.

Mod. The custom'd hour is past. It may not be.

What yet remains of night we dedicate
 To pious musing. Be thy station, Prince,
 Behind the altar; and, if sleep should deign
 There to descend upon thy closed lids,
 Haply her opiate poppies may supply
 More than their wonted balm, and purge thy soul
 From each remaining frailty. Many there,
 Resting their heads, have had experience strange
 Of influential sanctity convey'd
 In dream or vision, whose protracted power,
 Full long beyond that dream or vision's date,
 Remain'd to bless their bosoms.——Whence that noise?
 Methought I heard the sound of steps profane.
 Monarch, retire, the central Oak doth shake.

[*Exit Caractacus.*]

A Bard enters.

Bard. Father, as we did watch the eastern side,
 We spied, and instant seiz'd two stranger youths,
 Who, in the bottom of a shadowy dell,
 Held earnest converse. Britons do they seem,
 And of Brigantian race.

Mod. Haste, drag them hither.

SCENE II.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

Vel. O spare, ye sage and venerable Druids!
 Your countrymen and sons.

Mod. And are ye Britons?
 Unheard of profanation! Rome herself,

‘ Ev’n impious Rome, whom conquest makes more impious,’
Would not have dar’d so rashly. O! for words,
Big with the fiercest force of execration,
To blast the deed, and doers.

Eli. Spare the curse,
Oh spare our youth!

Mod. Is it not now the hour,
The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
Of yon starr’d concave climbs the full orb’d moon,
And to this nether world in solemn stillness
Gives sign, that to the list’ning ear of Heav’n
Religion’s voice should plead; the very babe
Knows this, and chance awak’d, his little hands
Lifts to the Gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing. ‘ Shall your manly years
‘ Plead ignorance, and impiously presume
‘ To press, with vile unconsecrated feet,
‘ On Mona’s hallow’d plain?’ Know, wretches, know,
At any hour such boldness is a crime,
At this ’tis sacrilege.

Vel. Dread Seer! Were Mona’s plain
More hallow’d still, hallow’d as is Heav’n’s self,
The cause might plead our pardon.

Eli. Mighty Druid!
True, we have rashly dar’d, yet, forc’d by duty,
Our sov’reign’s mandate——

Vel. Elder by my birth,
Brother, I claim, in right of eldership,
To open our high embassy.

Mod. Speak then;
But see thy words answer in honest weight
To this proud prelude. Youth! they must be weighty,
T’ atone for such a crime.

Vel. If then to give
 New nerves to vanquish'd valour, if to 'do,
 'What, with the blessing of the Gods, may' save
 A bleeding country from oppression's sword,
 Be weighty business, know, on our commission,
 And on its hop'd success, that weight depends.

Mod. Declare it then at once, briefly and boldly,

Vel. Caractacus is here.

Mod. Say'st thou, proud boy?

'Tis boldly said, and, grant 'twere truly said,
 Think'st thou he were not here from fraud or force
 As safe as 'midst a camp of conquerors?
 Here, youth, he would be guarded by the Gods;
 Their own high hostage; and each sacred hair
 Of his selected head, would in these caverns
 Sleep with the unsunn'd silver of the mine,
 As precious and as safe; record the time,
 When Mona e'er betray'd the hapless wretch,
 That made her groves his refuge.

Vel. Holy Druid!

'Think not so harshly of our enterprize,'
 Can force, alas! dwell in our unarm'd hands?
 Can fraud in our young bosoms? No, dread seer,
 'Our business told, I trust thou'lt soon disclaim
 'The vain suspicion; and thy holy ear
 '(Be brave Caractacus or here or absent)
 'Shall instant learn it.' From the north we come;
 The sons of her, whose heav'n-intrusted sway
 Blesses the bold Brigantes; men who firmly
 Have three long moons withstood those Roman powers,
 Which, led by fell Ostorius, still assail
 Our frontiers: yet so oft have our stout swords
 Repell'd their hot assault, that now, like falcons,

They hang suspended, loth to quit their prey,
Not daring yet to seize it. Such the state
Of us and Rome; 'mid which our prudent mother,
' Resolving what might to her people's weal
' Best sink the dubious scale,' gave us swift charge
To seek the great Caractacus, and call
His valour to her aid, to led her bands,
To fight the cause of Liberty and Britain,
And quell these ravagers.

[CARACTACUS starts from behind the Altar.]

SCENE III.

CARACTACUS, MODRED, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS,
CHORUS.

Car. And ye have found me;
Friends, ye have found me: lead me to your queen,
And the last purple drop in these old veins
Shall fall for her and Britain.

Mod. Rash, rash Prince!

Vel. Ye blest immortal pow'rs! is this the man,
The more than man, who for nine bloody years
Withstood all Rome? He is; that war-like front,
Seam'd o'er with honest scars, proclaims he is:
Kneel, brother, kneel, while in his royal hand
We lodge the signet: this, in pledge of faith,
Great Cartismandua sends, and with it tells thee
She has a nobler pledge than this behind;
Thy queen——

Car. Guideria!

Vel. Safely with our mother.

Car. How, when, where rescued? mighty Gods, I thank ye!

For it is true, this signet speaks it true.

O tell me briefly.

Vel. In a sally, Prince,

Which, wanting abler chiefs, my gracious mother
Committed to my charge, our troops assail'd

One outwork of the camp; the mask of night

Favour'd our arms, and there my happy hand

Was doom'd 'mid other prisoners to release

The captive matron.

Car. Let me clasp thee, youth,

And thou shalt be my son; I had one, stranger,

Just of thy years; he look'd like thee, right honest;

'Had just that free-born boldness on his brow,'

And yet he fail'd me. Were it not for him,

Who, as thou seest, ev'n at this hour of joy,

Draws tears down mine old cheek, I were as blest

As the great Gods. Oh, he has all disgrac'd

His high-born ancestry! But I'll forget him.

Haste, Evelina, barb my knotty spear,

Bind fast this trusty falchion to my thigh,

My bow, my target—

Mod. Rash Caractacus!

What hast thou done? What dost thou mean to do?

Car. To save my country.

Mod. To betray thyself.

That thou hast done; the rest thou canst not do,

If Heav'n forbids; and of its awful will

Thy fury recks not. 'Has the bleeding victim

'Pour'd a propitious stream? the milk-white steeds

'Unrein'd and neighing pranc'd with fav'ring steps?'

Say, when these youths approach'd, did not a gust

Of livid smoak involve the bickering flame?
Did not the forest tremble? Every omen
Led thee to doubt their honesty of purpose;
'And yet, before their tongues could tell that purpose,
'Ere I had tender'd, as our laws ordain,
'Their test of faith, thy rudeness rush'd before me,
'Infringing my just rights.'

Car. 'Druid, methinks,
'At such a time, in such a cause, reproof
'Might bait its sternness.' Now, by Heav'n, I feel,
Beyond all omens, that within my breast,
Which marshals me to conquest; something here
That snatches me beyond all mortal fears,
Lifts me to where upon her jasper throne
Sits flame-rob'd Victory, who calls me son,
And crowns me with a palm, whose deathless green
Shall bloom when Cæsar's fades.

Mod. Vain confidence!

Car. Yet I submit in all—

Mod. 'Tis meet thou should'st.

Thou art a king, a sov'reign o'er frail man;
I am a Druid, servant of the Gods;
Such service is above such sov'reignty,
As well thou know'st: if they should prompt these lips
To interdict the thing thou dar'st to do,
What would avail thy daring?

Car. Holy man!

But thou wilt bless it; Heav'n will bid thee bless it;
Thou know'st that, when we fight to save our country,
We fight the cause of Heav'n. The man that falls,
Falls hallow'd; falls a victim for the Gods;
For them and for their altars.

Mod. Valiant Prince!

Or thee, our country's champion. Well we know
 The glorious meed of those exalted souls,
 Who flame like thee for freedom: mark me, Prince,
 The time will come, when Destiny and Death,
 Thron'd in a burning car, the thund'ring wheels
 Arm'd with gigantic scythes of adamant,
 Shall scour this field of life, and in their rear
 The fiend Oblivion: kingdoms, empires, worlds,
 Melt in the general blaze: when, lo, from high
 Andraste darting, catches from the wreck
 The roll of fame, claps her ascending plumes,
 And stamps on orient stars each patriot name,
 Round her eternal dome.

Car. Speak ever thus,
 And I will hear thee, 'till attention faint
 In heedless extasy.

Mod. This tho' we know,
 Let man beware with headlong zeal to rush
 Where slaughter calls; it is not courage, Prince,
 No, nor the pride and practis'd skill in arms,
 That gains this meed: the warrior is no patriot,
 Save when, obsequious to the will of Heav'n,
 He draws the sword of vengeance.

Car. Surely, Druid,
 Such fair occasion speaks the will of Heav'n—

Mod. Monarch, perchance thou hast a fair occasion:
 But, if thou hast, the Gods will soon declare it:
 Their sov'reign will thou know'st not; this to learn
 Demands our search. Ye mortals all retire!
 Leave ye the grove to us and Inspiration;
 'Nor let a step, or ev'n one glance profane,
 'Steal from your caverns.'

[*Exeunt* Caractacus, Vellinus, &c.

SCENE IV.

MODRED, CHORUS.

Mod. Stay, my holy brethren :
Ye time-enobled Seers, whose rev'rend brows
Full eighty winters whiten ; you, ye Bards,
Leoline, Cadwall, Hoel, Cantaber,
Attend upon our slumbers. Wond'rous men,
Ye, whose skill'd fingers know how best to lead,
Thro' all the maze of sound the wayward step
Of Harmony, recalling oft, and oft
Permitting her unbridled course to rush
Thro' dissonance to concord, sweetest then
Ev'n when expected harshest. Mador, thou
Alone shalt lift thy voice ; no choral peal
Shall drown thy solemn warbling ; thou best know'st
That opiate charm which lulls corporeal sense :
Thou hast the key, great Bard ! that best can ope
The portal of the soul ; unlock it straight,
And lead the pensive pilgrim on her way,
Thro' the vast regions of futurity.

ODE.

AIR.

SECOND BARD.

“ Hail ! thou harp of Phrygian frame !
“ In years of yore that Camber bore
“ From Troy's sepulchral flame :
“ With ancient Brute, to Britain's shore
“ The mighty minstrel came.”

RECITATIVE *accompanied.*

FOURTH BARD.

“ Sublime upon thy burnish’d prow,
“ He bad thy manly modes to flow ;

AIR.

“ Britain heard the descant bold,
“ She flung her white arms o’er the sea ;
“ Proud in her leafy bosom to enfold
“ The freight of harmony.”

MADOR.

Mute ’till then was ev’ry plain,
Save where the flood o’er mountains rude
Tumbled his tide amain :
And Echo from th’ impending wood
Resounded the hoarse strain ;
While from the north the sullen gale
With hollow whistlings shook the vale ;
Dismal notes, and answer’d soon
By savage howl the heaths among,
What time the wolf doth bay the trembling moon,
And thin the bleating throng.
Thou spok’st, imperial lyre,
The rough roar ceas’d, and airs from high
Lapt the land in extasy :
Fancy, the fairy, with thee came ;
And Inspiration, bright-ey’d dame,
Oft at thy call would leave her sapphire sky ;

And, if not vain the verse presumes,
 Ev'n now some chaste Divinity is near:
 For lo! the sound of distant plumes
 Pants thro' the pathless desert of the air.
 'Tis not the flight of her;
 'Tis Sleep, her dewy harbinger.

SECOND BARD.

"Change my harp, Oh change thy measures;
 "Call, from thy mellifluous treasures,
 "Notes that steal on even feet,
 "Ever slow, yet never pausing,
 "Mixt with many a warble sweet,
 "In a ling'ring cadence closing."

MADOR.

Now the pleas'd pow'r sinks gently down the skies,
 And seals with hand of down the Druid's slumb'ring eyes.
 Thrice I pause, and thrice I sound [Symphony.
 The central string, and now I ring
 (By measur'd lore profound) [Symphony.
 A sevenfold chime, and sweep, and swing
 Above, below, around,
 To mix thy music with the spheres,
 That warble to immortal ears. [Symphony.
 Inspiration hears the call;
 She rises from her throne above,
 And, sudden as the glancing meteors fall,
 She comes, she fills the grove.
 High her port; her waving hand
 A pencil bears; the days, the years,
 Arise at her command,
 And each obedient colouring wears.

Lo, where Time's pictur'd band
 In hues ethereal glide along ;
 Oh mark the transitory throng ;
 Now they dazzle, now they die,
 Instant they flit from light to shade,
 Mark the blue forms of faint futurity,
 Oh mark them ere they fade.
 Whence was that inward groan ?
 Why bursts thro' closed lids the tear ?
 Why uplifts the bristling hair
 Its white and venerable shade ?
 Why down the consecrated head
 Courses in chilly drops the dew of fear ?
 All is not well, the pale-ey'd moon
 Curtains her head in clouds, the stars retire,
 Save from the sultry south alone.
 The swart star flings his pestilential fire ;
 Ev'n Sleep herself will fly,
 If not recall'd by Harmony.

THIRD BARD.

“ Wake, my lyre ! thy softest numbers,
 “ Such as nurse ecstatic slumbers,
 “ Sweet as tranquil virtue feels
 “ When the toil of life is ending,
 “ While from the earth the spirit steals,
 “ And, on new-born plumes ascending,
 “ Hastens to lave in the bright fount of day,
 “ 'Till Destiny prepare a shrine of purer clay.”

Mod. [waking, speaks.] It may not be. Avaunt, terrific
 axe !
 Why hangs thy bright edge glaring o'er the grove ?

Oh for a giant's nerve to ward the stroke!
It bows, it falls.
Where am I? hush, my soul!
'Twas all a dream. Resume no more the strain:
'The hour is past: my brethren! what ye saw,
'(If what we saw, as by your looks I read,
'Bore like ill omen'd shape) hold it in silence.'
The midnight air falls chilly on my breast;
And now I shiver, now a fev'rish glow
Scorches my vitals. Hark, some step approaches.

SCENE V.

EVELINA, MODRED, CHORUS.

Eve. Thus, with my wayward fears, to burst unbidden
On your dread synod, rousing, as ye seem,
From holy trance, appears a desperate deed,
Ev'n to the wretch who dares it.

Mod. Virgin! quickly
Pronounce the cause.

Eve. Bear with a simple maid
Too prone to fear, perchance my fears are vain.

Mod. But yet declare them.

Eve. I suspect me much
The faith of these Brigantes.

Mod. Say'st thou, Virgin?
Heed what thou say'st; Suspicion is a guest
That in the breast of man, of ireful man,
Too oft' his welcome finds; yet seldom sure
In that submissive calm that smooths the mind
Of maiden innocence.

Eve. I know it well:
Yet must I still distrust the elder stranger:

For while he talks, (and much the flatterer talks)
 His brother's silent carriage gives disproof
 Of all his boast; 'indeed I mark'd it well;
 'And, as my father with the elder held
 'Bold speech and warlike, as is still his wont
 'When fir'd with hope of conquest;' oft I saw
 A sigh unbidden heave the younger's breast,
 Half check'd as it was rais'd; sometimes, methought,
 His gentle eye would cast a glance on me,
 As if he pitied me; and then again
 Would fasten on my father, gazing there
 To veneration; then he'd sigh again,
 Look on the ground, and hang his modest head
 Most pensively.

Mod. This may demand, my brethren,
 More serious search: Virgin! proceed.

Eve. 'Tis true,
 My father, rapt in high heroic zeal,
 'His ev'ry thought big with his country's freedom,'
 Heeds not the different carriage of these brethren,
 'The elder takes him wholly; yet, methinks,
 'The younger's manners have, I know not what,
 'That speaks him far more artless.' This besides,
 Is it not strange, if, as the tale reports,
 My mother sojourns with this distant queen,
 She should not send or to my sire, or me,
 Some fond remembrance of her love? ah! none.
 With tears I speak it, none, not her dear blessing
 Has reach'd my longing ears.

Mod. The Gods, my brethren,
 Inspire these scruples; oft to female softness,
 Oft to the purity of virgin souls
 Doth heav'n its voluntary light dispense,

When victims bleed in vain. They must be spies.
Hie thee, good Cantaber, and to our presence
Summon the young Brigantian.

Eve. Do not that,
Or, if ye do, yet treat him nothing sternly :
The softest terms from such a tender breast
Will draw confession, and, if ye shall find
The treason ye suspect, forbear to curse him.
(Not that my weakness means to guide your wisdom)
Yet, as I think he would not wittingly
E'er do a deed of baseness, were it granted
That I might question him, my heart forebodes
It more could gain by gentleness and prayers,
Than will the fiercest threats.

Mod. Perchance it may :
And quickly shalt thou try. But see the King !
And with him both the youths.

Eve. Alas ! my fears
Forewent my errand, else had I inform'd thee
That therefore did I come, and from my father
To gain admission. Mark the younger Druid,
How sad he seems ; oft did he in the cave
So fold his arms——

Mod. We mark him much, and much
The elder's free and dreadless confidence.
Virgin, retire awhile in yonder vale,
Nor, 'till thy royal father quits the grove,
Resume thy station here.

[*Exit Evelina.*]

SCENE VI.

CARACTACUS, MODRED, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS,
CHORUS.

Carac. Forgive me, Druid!

My eager soul no longer could sustain
The pangs of expectation; 'hence I sent
'The virgin innocence of Evelina,
'Safest to break upon your privacy:
'She not return'd, Oh pardon! that uncall'd
'I follow:' the great cause, I trust, absolves me:
'Tis your's, 'tis freedom's, 'tis the cause of Heav'n;
And sure Heav'n owns it such.

Mod. Caractacus,

All that by sage and sanctimonious rites
Might of the Gods be ask'd, we have essay'd,
And yet, nor to our wish, nor to their wont,
Gave they benign assent.

Car. Death to our hopes!

Mod. While yet we lay in sacred slumber trac'd,
Sullen and sad to fancy's frighted eye
Did shapes of dun and murky hue advance,
In train tumultuous, 'all of gesture strange,
'And passing horrible;' starting we wak'd,
Yet felt no waking calm; still all was dark,
Still rang our tinkling ears with screams of woe.
Suspicious tremors still——

Vel. Of what suspicious?

Druid, our Queen——

Mod. Restrain thy way-ward tongue,
Insolent youth! in such licentious mood

To interrupt our speech ill suits thy years,
And worse our sanctity.

Car. 'Tis his distress
Makes him forget, what else his reverend zeal
Would pay ye holily. Think what he feels,
Poor youth! who fears yon moon, before she wanes,
May see his country conquer'd; see his mother
The victor's slave, her royal blood debas'd,
Dragging her chains thro' the throng'd streets of Rome,
To grace oppression's triumph. 'Horrid thought!
' Say, can it be that he, whose strenuous youth
' Adds vigour to his virtue, e'er can bear
' This patiently? He comes to ask my aid,
' And, that with-held, (as now he needs must fear)
' What means, alas! are left? Search Britain round,
' What Chief dares cope with Rome? What King but holds
' His loan of power at a Proconsul's will,
' At best a scepter'd slave?'

Vel. Yes, monarch, yes,
If Heav'n restrains thy formidable sword,
Or to its stroke denies that just success
Which Heav'n alone can give, I fear me much
Our Queen, ourselves, nay, Britain's self must perish.

Car. But is not this a fear makes virtue vain?
Tears from yon ministring regents of the sky
Their right? Plucks from firm-handed Providence
The golden reins of sublunary sway,
And gives them to blind Chance? 'If this be so,
' If Tyranny must lord it o'er the earth,
' There's anarchy in Heav'n.' Nay, frown not, Druid,
I do not think 'tis thus.

Mod. We trust thou dost not.

Car. Masters of Wisdom! No: my soul confides

In that all-healing and all-forming Power
 Who, on the radiant day when Time was born,
 Cast his broad eye upon the wild of ocean,
 And calm'd it with a glance: then, plunging deep
 His mighty arm, pluck'd from its dark domain
 This throne of Freedom, lifted it to light,
 Girt it with silver cliffs, and call'd it Britain:
 He did, and will preserve it.

Mod. Pious Prince,

In that all-healing and all-forming Power
 Still let thy soul confide; but not in men,
 No, not in these, ingenuous as they seem,
 'Till they are try'd by that high test of faith
 Our ancient laws ordain.

Vel. Illustrious Seer!

Methinks our Sov'reign's signet well might plead
 Her envoy's faith. Thy pardon, mighty Druid,
 Not for ourselves, but for our Queen we plead;
 Mistrusting us, ye wound her honour.

Mod. Peace;

Our will admits no parley. Thither, youths,
 Turn your astonish'd eyes; behold yon huge
 And unhewn sphere of living adamant,
 Which, pois'd by magic, rests its central weight
 On yonder pointed rock; firm as it seems,
 Such is its strange and virtuous property,
 It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch
 Of him, whose breast is pure; but to a traitor,
 Tho' ev'n a giant's prowess nerv'd his arm,
 It stands as fixt as Snowdon. No reply;
 The Gods command that one of you must now
 Approach and try it: in your snowy vests,

Ye priests, involve the lots, and to the younger,
As is our wont, tender the choice of Fate.

E.i. Heav'ns! is it fall'n on me?

Mod. Young Prince, it is;

Prepare thee for thy trial.

Eli. Gracious Gods!

Who may look up to your tremendous thrones,
And say his breast is pure? All-searching Powers,
Ye know already how and what I am;
And what ye mean to publish me in Mona,
To that I yield and tremble.

Car. Rouse thee, youth!

And, with that courage honest Truth supplies,
(For sure ye both are true) haste to the trial;
Behold I lead thee on.

Mod. Prince, we arrest,

Thy hasty step: Know, e'er he meet that trial,
He must be plung'd into the dark drear womb
Of this deep cavern, which the yawning earth,
Struck with our wand, now opens to thy view.
A thousand rugged steps of moss-grown rock
Lead to its horrible base. Low as that base,
Where never ray of chearing light yet shot,
The youth must now descend; there shall he sit,
With solitude and silence compass'd round,
Till our recalling clarion bids him climb
Again to our dread presence. Meanwhile there,
Ev'n in the centre of that perilous pit,
The solemn recollection of his deeds
Done, or design'd, shall pass in cold review
Before him; horror then shall shake his soul,
If, in the varied file, one deed be found

Alien to Truth and Virtue.

[Elidurus descends.

To thy charge,

Caractacus, his brother we consign.

Guard him in yonder cave. The trial past,

Again will we confer, touching that part

Which Heav'n's high will ordains thee to perform.

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Curtain draws up, while a slow March is played. MODRED, &c. open the Cavern in which ELIDURUS was confined: they lead him in Procession round the Altar, and from thence to the rocking Stone: then the following Ode is performed by MADOR and the Bards.

ODE.

RECITATIVE *accompanied.*

SECOND BARD.

“ THOU spirit pure, that spread'st unseen,
 “ Thy pinions o'er this pond'rous sphere,
 “ And, breathing thro' each rigid vein,
 “ Fill'st with stupendous life the marble mass,
 “ And bid'st it bow upon its base,
 “ When sov'reign Truth is near:

FULL CHORUS.

“ Spirit invisible! to thee
 “ We swell the solemn harmony.

AIR and CHORUS.

“ Hear us, and aid:

“ Thou that in Virtue’s cause
“ O’er-rulest Nature’s laws,
“ Oh hear, and aid with influence high
“ The sons of Peace and Piety.”

MADOR.

First-born of that ethereal tribe
Call’d into birth ere time or place,
Whom wave nor wind can circumscribe,
Heirs of the liquid liberty of Light,
That float on rainbow pennons bright
Thro’ all the wilds of space,
Yet thou alone of all thy kind
Can’st range the regions of the mind,
Thou only know’st
That dark meandring maze,
Where wayward Falsehood strays,
And, seizing swift the lurking sprite,
Forcest her forth to shame and light.
Thou can’st enter the dark cell
Where the vulture Conscience slumbers,
And, unarm’d by charming spell,
Or magic numbers,
Can’st rouse her from her formidable sleep,
And bid her dart her raging talons deep;
Yet, ah! too seldom doth the furious fiend
Thy bidding wait; vindictive, self-prepar’d,
She knows her torturing time; too sure to
The trembling heart, when Virtue quits her guard
Pause then, celestial guest!
And brooding on thine adamantine sphere,
If fraud approach, Spirit, that fraud declare:
To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

RECITATIVE *accompanied.*

FOURTH BARD.

“ Pause then, celestial guest !
 “ And, brooding on thine adamantine sphere,
 “ If fraud approach, Spirit, that fraud declare :
 “ To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.”

FULL CHORUS.

“ To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.”

MODRED.

Heard'st thou the awful invocation, youth,
 Rapt in those holy harpings ?

ELIDURUS.

Sage, I did ;
 And it came o'er my soul as doth the thunder,
 While distant yet, it, with expected burst,
 Threatens the trembling ear. Now to the trial.

MODRED.

Ere that, bethink thee well what's rig'rous doom
 Attends thine act, if failing, certain death :
 So certain, that in our absolving tongues
 Rests not that power may save thee : Thou must die.

SCENE II.

EVELINA, ELIDURUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

Eve. Die, say'st thou ? Druid !

Eli. Evelina here !

Lead to the rock.

Mod. No, youth, awhile we spare thee ;
And, in our stead, permit this royal maiden
To urge thee first with virgin gentleness ;
Respect our clemency, and meet her questions
With answers prompt and true ; so may'st thou 'scape
A sterner trial:

Eli. Rather to the rock——

Eve. Dost thou disdain me, Prince ? Lost as I am,
Methinks the daughter of Caractacus
Might merit milder treatment : I was born
To royal hopes and promise, nurs'd i' th' lap
Of soft prosperity ; alas the change !
I meant but to address a few brief words
To this young Prince, and he doth turn his eye,
And scorns to answer me.

Eli. Scorn thee, sweet maid ?

No, 'tis the fear——

Eve. And can'st thou fear me, youth ?
Ev'n while I led a life of royalty,
I bore myself to all with meek deportment,
In nothing harsh, or cruel : and, howe'er
Misfortune works upon the minds of men,
(For some they say it turns to very stone)
Mine I am sure it softens. Wert thou guilty,
Yet I should pity thee ; nay, wert thou leagu'd
'To load this suffering heart with more misfortunes,
Still should I pity thee ; nor e'er believe
Thou would'st, on free and voluntary choice,
Betray the innocent.

Eli. Indeed I would not.

Eve. No, gracious youth, I do believe thou would'st not :
For on thy brow the liberal hand of Heav'n
Has portray'd Truth as visible and bold,

As were the pictur'd suns that deck'd the brows
 Of our brave ancestors. Say then, young Prince,
 (For therefore have I wish'd to question thee)
 Bring ye no token of a mother's fondness
 To her expecting child? ' Gentle thou seemest,
 ' And sure that gentleness would prompt thine heart
 ' To visit, and to sooth, with courteous office,
 ' Distress like her's.' A captive and a queen
 Has more than common claim for pity, Prince,
 And, ev'n the ills of venerable age
 Were cause enough to move thy tender nature.
 The tears o'er-charge thine eye. Alas, my fears!
 Sickness or sore infirmity had seiz'd her,
 Before thou left'st the palace, else her lips
 Had to thy care intrusted some kind message,
 And blest her hapless daughter by thy tongue.
 Would she were here!

Eli. Would Heav'n she were!

Eve. Ah, why?

Eli. Because you wish it.

Eve. Thanks, ingenuous youth,
 For this thy courtesy. Yet if the queen
 Thy mother shines with such rare qualities,
 As late thy brother boasted, she will calm
 Her woes, and I shall clasp her aged knees
 Again, in peace and liberty.— Alas!
 He speaks not; all my fears are just.

Eli. What fears?

The Queen Guideria is not dead.

Eve. Not dead!

But is she in that happy state of freedom,
 Which we were taught to hope? Why sigh'st thou, youth?

Thy years have yet been prosp'rous. Did thy father
E'er lose a kingdom? Did captivity
E'er seize thy shrieking mother? Thou can'st go
To yonder cave, and find thy brother safe :
He is not lost as mine is. Youth, thou sigh'st
Again ; thou hast not sure such cause for sorrow ;
But if thou hast, give me thy griefs, I pray thee ;
I have a heart can softly sympathize,
And sympathy is soothing.

Eli. O Gods! Gods!

She tears my soul. What shall I say?

Eve. Perchance,

For all in this bad world must have their woes,
Thou too hast thine ; and may't, like me, be wretched.
Haply amid the ruinous waste of war,
'Mid that wild havock,' which these sons of blood
Bring on our groaning country, some chaste maid,
Whose tender soul was link'd by love to thine,
Might fall the trembling prey to Roman rage,
Ev'n at the golden hour, when holy rites
Had seal'd your virtuous vows. If it were so,
Indeed I pity her !

Eli. Not that: not that.

Never 'till now did beauty's matchless beam——
But I am dumb.

Eve. Why that dejected eye?

And why this silence? That some weighty grief
O'erhangs thy soul, thy ev'ry look proclaims.
Why then refuse it words? The heart, that bleeds
From any stroke of fate or human wrongs,
Loves to disclose itself, that list'ning pity
May drop a healing tear upon the wound.
'Tis only, when with inbred horror smote

At some base act, or done, or to be done,
That the recoiling soul, with conscious dread,
Shrinks back into itself. But thou, good youth—

Eli. Cease, royal maid! permit me to depart.—

Eve. Yet hear me, stranger! Truth and Secrecy,
Tho' friends, are seldom necessary friends—

Eli. I go to try my truth.—

Eve. O go not hence

In wrath; think not that I suspect thy virtue:
Yet ignorance may oft make virtue slide,
And if———

Eli. In pity spare me.

Eve. If thy brother——

Nay, start not, do not turn thine eye from mine.
Speak, I conjure thee, is his purpose honest?
I know the guilty price that barbarous Rome
Sets on my father's head; and gold, vile gold,
Has now a charm for Britons: 'Brib'd by this,
'Should he betray him'——Yes, I see thou shudder'st
At the dire thought; yet not, as if 'twere strange;
But as our fears were mutual. Ah, young stranger,
That open face scarce needs a tongue to utter
What works within. Come then, ingenuous Prince,
And instant make discovery to the Druid,
While yet 'tis not too late.

Eli. Ah! what discover?

Say, whom must I betray?

Eve. Thy brother.

Eli. Ha!

Eve. Who is no brother, if his guilty soul
Teems with such perfidy. O all ye stars!
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who would betray an old and honour'd king,

That king his countryman, and one whose prowess
 Once guarded Britain 'gainst th' assailing world?
 Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
 Who from a young, defenceless, innocent maid,
 Would take that king, her father? Make her suffer
 All that an orphan suffers? More perchance:
 The ruffian foe.—O tears, ye choak my utterance!
 ' Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
 ' Who would defile his soul by such black deeds?'
 It cannot be—And yet, thou still art silent.
 Turn, youth, and see me weep. Ah, see me kneel:
 I am of royal blood, not wont to kneel,
 Yet will I kneel to thee. O save my father!
 Save a distressful maiden from the force
 Of barbarous men! Be thou a brother to me,
 For mine, alas!—ha! [*Sees Arviragus entering.*]

SCENE III.

ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA, ELIDURUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

Arv. Evelina, rise!

Know, maid, I ne'er will tamely see thee kneel,
 Ev'n at the foot of Cæsar.

Eve. 'Tis himself:

And he will prove my father's fears were false,
 False, as his son is brave. Thou best of brothers,
 Come to my arms. Where hast thou been, thou wanderer?
 How wer't thou sav'd? Indeed, Arviragus,
 I never shed such tears, since thou wer't lost,
 For these are tears of rapture.

Arv. Evelina!

Fain would I greet thee as a brother ought !
But wherefore didst thou kneel ?

Eve. Oh ! ask not now.

Arv. By heav'n I must, and he must answer me,
Who'er he be. What art thou, sullen stranger ?

Eli. A Briton.

Arv. Brief and bold.

Eve. Ah, spare the taunt :
He merits not thy wrath. Behold the Druids ;
Lo, they advance : with holy reverence first
Thou must address their sanctity.

Arv. I will.

But see, proud boy, thou dost not quit the grove,
Till time allows us parley.

Eli. Prince, I mean not. [*Elidurns retires among the Chorus.*]

Arv. Sages, and sons of Heav'n ! Illustrious Druids !
Abruptly I approach your sacred presence :
Yet such dire tidings——

Mod. On thy peril, peace !
Thou stand'st accused, and by a father's voice,
Of crimes abhorr'd, of cowardice and flight ;
And therefore may'st not in these sacred groves
Utter polluted accents. Quickly say,
Wherefore thou fled'st ? For, that base fact unclear'd,
We hold no further converse.

Arv. O ye Gods !
Am I the son of your Caractacus ?
And could I fly ?

Mod. Waste not or time or words :
But tell us, why thou fled'st.

Arv. I fled not, Druid !
By the great Gods I fled not ! save to stop
Our dastard troops, that basely turn'd their backs.

I stop, I rallied them, when lo, a shaft
Of random cast did level me with earth,
Where, pale and senseless as the slain around me,
I lay till midnight: then, as from long trance
Awoke, I crawl'd upon my feeble limbs
To a lone cottage, where a pitying hind
Lodg'd me and nourish'd me. My strength repair'd,
Need I repeat the arts I us'd to screen me?
How now a peasant, from a beggarly scrip
I sold cheap food to slaves, that nam'd the price,
Nor after gave it. Now a minstrel poor,
With ill-tun'd harp and uncouth descant shrill,
I ply'd a thriftless trade, and by such shifts
Did win obscurity to shroud my name.
At length to other conquests in the north
Ostorius led his legions. Safer now,
Yet not secure, I to some valiant chiefs,
Whom war had spar'd, discover'd what I was;
And with them plann'd how surest we might draw
Our scatter'd forces to some rocky fastness
In rough Caernarvon, there to breathe in freedom,
If not with brave incursion to oppress
The thinly-station'd foe. And soon our art
So well avail'd, that now on Snowdon's foot
Full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait
To call my sire their leader.

Mod. Valiant youth——

Eve. He is—I said he was a valiant youth,
Nor has he sham'd his race. Yes, I will fly,
And bless him with the news.

[*Exit Evelina.*]

SCENE IV.

MODRED, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS.

Mod. We do believe
Thy modest tale : and may the righteous Gods
Thus ever shed upon thy noble breast
Discretion's cooling dew. When nurtur'd so,
Then, only then, doth valour bloom mature.

Arv. Yet vain is valour, howso'er it bloom.
Druid, the Gods frown on us. All my hopes
Are blasted ; I shall ne'er rejoin my friends ;
Ne'er bless them with my father. Holy men,
I have a tale to tell, will shake your souls.—
Your Mona is invaded. Rome approaches,
Ev'n to these groves approaches.

Mod. Horror ! horror !

Arv. Late, as I landed on yon highest beach,
Where nodding from the rocks the poplars fling
Their scatter'd arms, and dash them in the wave,
There were their vessels moor'd, as if they sought
Concealment in the shade, and as I past
Up yon thick-planted ridge, I 'spy'd their helms
'Mid brakes and boughs trench'd in the heath below,
Where like a nest of night-worms did they glitter,
Sprinkling the plain with brightness. On I sped
With silent step, yet oft did pass so near,
'Twas next to prodigy I 'scap'd unseen.

Mod. Their numbers, Prince ?

Arv. Few, if mine hasty eye
Did find, and count them all.

Mod. O brethren, brethren!
Treason and sacrilege, worse foes than Rome,
Have led Rome hither. Instant seize that wretch
And bring him to our presence.

SCENE V.

MODRED, ELIDURUS, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS.

Mod. Say, thou false one!
What doom befits the slave who sells his country?

Eli. Death, sudden death.

Mod. No, ling'ring piece-meal death;
And to such death thy brother and thyself
We now devote. Villain, thy deeds are known!
'Tis known ye led the impious Romans hither
To slaughter us ev'n on our holy altars.

Eli. That on my soul doth lie some secret grief,
These looks perforce will tell. It is not fear,
Druids, it is not fear that shakes me thus;
The great Gods know it is not; ye can never:
For, what tho' wisdom lifts ye next those Gods,
Ye cannot, like to them, unlock mens' breasts,
And read their inmost thoughts. Ah! that ye could.

Arv. What hast thou done?

Eli. What, Prince, I will not tell.

Mod. Wretch, there are means——

Eli. I know, and terrible means;
And 'tis both fit that you should try those means,
And I endure them: yet I think my patience
Will for some space baffle your torturing fury.

Mod. Be that best known, when our inflicted goads
Harrow thy flesh !

Arv. Stranger, ere this is try'd,
Confess the whole of thy black perfidy ;
So black, that when I look upon thy youth,
Read thy mild eye, and mark thy modest brow,
I think, indeed, thou durst not.

Eli. Such a crime,
Indeed, I durst not ; and would rather be
The very wretch thou seest. I'll speak no more.

Mod. Brethren 'tis so. The Virgin's thoughts were just :
This youth has been deceiv'd.

Eli. Yes, one word more :

You say, the Romans have invaded Mona.
Give me a sword and twenty honest Britons,
And I will quell those Romans. Vain demand !
Alas ! you cannot : ye are men of peace :
Religion's self forbids. Lead them to torture.

Arv. Now on my soul this youth doth move me much.

Mod. Think not religion and our holy office
Doth teach us tamely, like the bleating lamb,
To crouch before oppression, and with neck
Outstretch'd await the stroke. ' Mistaken boy !
' Did not strict justice claim thee for her victim,
' We might full safely send thee to these Romans,
' Inviting their hot charge.' Know, when I blow
That sacred trumpet bound with sable fillets
To yonder branching oak, the awful sound
Calls forth a thousand Britons train'd alike
In holy and in martial exercise,
Not by such mode and rule, as Romans use,
But of that fierce portentous horrible sort,
As shall appall ev'n Romans.

Eli. Gracious Gods!

Then there are hopes indeed. Oh call them instant;
This Prince will lead them on: I'll follow him,
Tho' in my chains, and some way dash them round
To harm the haughty foe.

Arv. A thousand Britons!

And arm'd! O instant blow the sacred trump,
And let me head them. Yet methinks this youth—

Mod. I know, what thou would'st say—might join thee,
Prince.

True; were he free from crime, or had confest.

Eli. Confest! Ah, think not, I will e'er—

Arv. Reflect.

Either thyself or brother must have wrong'd us:
Then why conceal—

Eli. Hast thou a brother? No!

Else had'st thou spar'd the word; and yet a sister,
Lovely as thine, might more than teach thee, Prince,
What 'tis to have a brother. Hear me, Druids,
Tho' I would prize an hour of freedom now,
Before an age of any after date;
Tho' I would seize it as the gift of Heav'n,
And use it as Heav'n's gift; yet do not think
I so will purchase it. Give it me freely,
I yet will spurn the boon, and hug my chains,
Till you do swear by your own hoary heads,
My brother shall be safe.

Mod. Excellent youth!

Thy words do speak thy soul, and such a soul
As wakes our wonder. Thou art free; thy brother
Shall be thine honour's pledge: so will we use him,
As thou art false or true.

Eli. I ask no other.

Arv. Thus then, my fellow soldier, to thy clasp
I give the hand of friendship. Noble youth,
We'll speed, or die together.

Mod. Hear us, Prince!

Mona permits not that he fight her battles
Till duly purified: for tho' his soul
Took up unwittingly this deed of baseness,
Yet is lustration meet. Learn, that in vice
There is a noisome rankness, 'unperceiv'd
'By gross corporeal sense,' which so offends
Heav'n's pure divinities, as us the stench
Of vapour wafted from sulphureous pool,
Or pois'nous weed obscene. Hence doth the man,
Who ev'n converses with a villain, need
As much purgation as the pallid wretch
'Scap'd from the walls, where frowning pestilence
Spreads wide her livid banners. For this cause,
Ye priests, conduct the youth to yonder grove,
And do the needful rites. [*Exeunt Priests with Elidurus.*
For thee, brave Prince,
Some fit repose is needful. To our cave,
Behold, we lead thee; and, some moments there
To that repose allow'd, we then will bless
Thy duteous eyes with their dear father's presence.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Curtain draws up, and discovers MODRED and the CHORUS before the altar : then, on one side, enter CARACTACUS and EVELINA; on the other, ARVIRAGUS.

CARACTACUS ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS, EVELINA.

Caractacus.

O MY Arviragus ! my son ! my son !
What joy, what transport, doth thine aged sire
Feel in these filial foldings ! Speak not, boy,
Nor interrupt that heart-felt ecstasy
Should strike us mute. I know what thou would'st say,
Yet, pr'ythee, peace. Thy sister's voice hath clear'd thee,
And, could excuse find words at this blest moment,
Trust me, I'd give it vent. But, 'tis enough ;
Thy father welcomes thee to him and honour :
Honour, that now with rapt'rous certainty
Calls thee his own true offspring. Dost thou weep ?
Ah, if thy tears swell not from joy's free spring,
I beg thee, spare them. I have done thee wrong,
Can make thee no atonement : none, alas !
Thy father scarce can bless thee as he ought ;
Unblest himself, beset with foes around,
Bereft of queen, of kingdom, and of soldiers,
He can but give thee portion of his dangers,
Perchance and of his chains : yet droop not, boy,
Virtue is still thy own.

Arv. It is, my father !

Pure as from thine illustrious fount it came ;

And that unsullied, let the world oppress us ;
Let fraud and falsehood rivet fetters on us ;
Still shall our souls be free : yet hope is ours,
As well as virtue.

Car. Spoken like a Briton.

True, hope is ours, and therefore let's prepare :
The moments now are precious. Tell us, Druid,
Is it not meet we see the bands drawn out,
And mark their due array ?

Mod. Monarch, ev'n now
They skirt the grove.

Car. Then let us to their front.

Mod. But is the traitor-youth in safety lodg'd ?

Car. Druid, he fled——

Mod. O fatal flight to Mona !

Car. But what of that ? Arviragus is here,
My son is here : let then the traitor go.
By this he has join'd the Romans : let him join them ;
A single arm, and that a villain's arm,
Can lend but little aid to any powers
Oppos'd to truth and virtue. Come, my son,
Let's to the troops, and marshal them with speed.
That done, we from these venerable men
Will claim their ready blessing : then to battle ;
And the swift sun, ev'n at his purple dawn,
Shall spy us crown'd with conquest, or with death.

[*Exeunt Caractacus and Arviragus.*]

SCENE II.

MODRED, EVELINA, CHORUS.

Mod. What may his flight portend ? Say, Evelina !
How came this youth to 'scape ?

Eve. And that to tell
Will fix much blame on my impatient folly :
For, ere your hallow'd lips had given permission,
I flew with eager haste to bear my father
News of his son's return. ' Enflam'd with that,
' Think, how a sister's zealous breast must glow !
' Your looks give mild assent. I glow'd indeed
' With the dear tale, and sped me in his ear
' To pour the precious tidings.' But my tongue
Scarce nam'd Arviragus, ere the false stranger
' (As I bethink me since) with stealthy pace,'
Fled to the cavern's mouth,

Mod. The king pursued ?

Eve. Alas ! he mark'd him not, for 'twas the moment,
When he had all to ask, and all to fear,
Touching my brother's valour. ' Hitherto
' His safety only, which but little mov'd him,
' Had reach'd his ears : but when my tongue unfolded
' The story of his bravery and his peril,
' O how the tears cours'd plenteous down his cheeks !
' How did he lift unto the heav'ns his hands
' In speechless transport !' Yet he soon bethought him
Of Rome's invasion, and with fiery glance
Survey'd the cavern round ; then snatch'd his spear,
And menac'd to pursue the flying traitor :

But I with prayers (O pardon, if they err'd)
Withheld his step, for to the left the youth
Had wing'd his way, where the thick underwood
Afforded sure retreat. ' Besides, if found,
' Was age a match for youth?'

Mod. Maiden, enough.

Better, perchance, for us, if he were captive :
But in the justice of their cause, and Heav'n,
Do Mona's sons confide.

SCENE III.

BARD, MODRED, ELIDURUS, EVELINA, CHORUS.

Bard. Druid, the rites
Are finish'd, all save that which crowns the rest,
And which pertains to thy blest hand alone :
For that he kneels before thee.

Mod. Take him hence,
We may not trust him forth to fight our cause.

Eli. Now by Andraste's throne——

Mod. Nay, swear not, youth;
The tie is broke, that held thy fealty ;
Thy brother's fled.

El. Fled !

Mod. To the Romans fled.
Yes ; thou hast cause to tremble.

El. Ah, Vellinus !

Does thus our love, does thus our friendship end ?
Was I thy brother, youth, and hast thou left me ?
Yes ; and how left me, cruel as thou art,
The victim of thy crimes !

Mod. True; thou must die.

Eli. I pray ye then, on your best mercy, fathers,
It may be speedy. I would fain be dead,
If this be life: yet I must doubt ev'n that;
For falsehood of this strange stupendous sort
Sets firm-ey'd Reason on a gaze, mistrusting
That what she sees in palpable plain form,
The stars in yon blue arch, these woods, these caverns,
Are all mere tricks of cozenage; nothing real;
The vision of a vision. If he's fled,
I ought to hate this brother.

Mod. Yet thou dost not.

Eli. But when astonishment will give me leave,
Perchance I shall.—And yet he is my brother;
And he was virtuous once. Yes, ye vile Romans!
Yes, I must die before my thirsty sword
Drinks one rich drop of vengeance. Yet, ye robbers!
Yet will I curse you with my dying lips:
'Twas you that stole away my brother's virtue.

Mod. Now then prepare to die.

Eli. I am prepar'd.

Yet, since I cannot now (what most I wish'd)
By manly prowess guard this lovely maid,
Permit that on your holiest earth I kneel,
And pour one fervent prayer for her protection.
Allow me this; for, though you think me false,
The Gods will hear me.

Eve. I can hold no longer!

O Druid, Druid, at thy feet I fall!
Yes, I must plead (away with virgin blushes)
For such a youth must plead. I'll die to save him.
O take my life, and let him fight for Mona.

Mod. Virgin, arise. His virtue hath redeem'd him,

And he shall fight for thee and for his country.
 Youth, thank us with thy deeds. The time is short,
 And now with reverence take our high lustration:
 Thrice do we sprinkle thee with day-break dew
 Shook from the May-thorn blossom; twice and thrice
 Touch we thy forehead with our holy wand:
 Now thou art fully purg'd. Now rise restor'd
 To virtue and to us. Hence then, my son,
 Hie thee to yonder altar, where our Bards
 Shall arm thee duly both with helm and sword
 For warlike enterprize. [Exit Elidurus.]

SCENE IV.

CARACTACUS, MODRED, ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA,
 CHORUS.

Car. 'Tis true, my Son,
 Bold are their bearings, and I fear me not
 But they have hearts will not belie their looks.
 I like them well. Yet would to righteous heav'n
 Those valiant veterans that on Snowdon guard
 Their scanty pittance of bleak liberty
 Were here to join them; we would teach these wolves,
 Tho' we permit their rage to prowl our coasts,
 That vengeance waits them ere they rob our altars.
 Hail, Druid, hail! we find thy valiant guards
 Accoutred so, as well bespeaks the wisdom
 That fram'd their phalanx. We but wait thy blessing
 To lead them 'gainst the foe.

Mod. Caractacus!
 Behold this sword: The sword of old Belinus,
 Stain'd with the blood of giants, and its name
 TRIFINGUS. Many an age its charmed blade

Has slept within yon consecrated trunk.
Lo, I unsheath it, King! 'I wave it o'er thee:
'Mark, what portentous streams of scarlet light
'Flow from the brandish'd falchion.' On thy knee
Receive the sacred pledge.—And mark our words:—
By the bright circle of the golden sun;
By the brief courses of the errant moon;
By the dread potency of every star
That studs the mystic zodiac's burning girth;
By each, and all of these supernal signs,
We do adjure thee with this trusty blade,
To guard yon central oak, whose holy stem
Involves the spirit of high Taranis:
This be thy charge; to which in aid we join
Ourselves, and our sage brethren. With our vassals
Thy son and the Brigantian Prince shall make
Incursion on the foe.

Car. In this, and all,
'Your holy will be done.' Yet surely, Druid,
The fresh and active vigour of these youths
Might better suit with this important charge.
Not that my heart shrinks at the glorious task,
But will with ready zeal pour forth its blood
Upon the sacred roots, my firmest courage
Might fail to save. Yet, Fathers, I am old;
And if I fell the foremost in the onset,
Should leave a son behind, might still defend you.

Mod. The sacred adjuration we have utter'd
May never be recall'd.

Car. Then be it so.
But do not think I counsel this thro' fear:
Old as I am, I trust with half our powers
I could drive back these Romans to their ships;

Dastards, that come as doth the cow'ring fowler
 To tangle me with snares and take me tamely :
 Slaves, they shall find, that ere they gain their prey,
 They have to hunt it boldly with barb'd spears,
 And meet such conflict as the chased boar
 Gives to his stout assailants. O ye Gods!
 That I might instant face them.

Mod. Be thy son's
 The onset.

Arv. From his soul that son doth thank ye,
 Blessing the wisdom that preserves his father
 Thus to the last. ' Oh, if the fav'ring Gods
 ' Direct this arm, if their high will permit,
 ' I pour a prosperous vengeance on the foe ;
 ' I ask for life no longer, than to crown
 ' The valiant task.' Steel then, ye powers of Heav'n,
 Steel my firm soul with your own fortitude,
 Free from alloy of passion. Give me courage,
 That knows not rage ; revenge, that knows not malice ;
 Let me not thirst for carnage, but for conquest :
 And, conquest gain'd, sleep vengeance in my breast,
 Ere in its sheath my sword.

Car. O hear his father !
 If ever rashness spurr'd me on, great Gods,
 To acts of danger thirsting for renown ;
 If e'er my eager soul pursued its course
 Beyond just reason's limit, visit not
 My faults on him. I am the thing you made me,
 Vindictive, bold, precipitate, and fierce :
 But as you gave to him a milder mind,
 Oh bless him, bless him with a milder fate !

Eve. Nor yet unheard let Evelina pour
 Her pray'rs and tears. Oh hear a hapless maid,

That ev'n thro' half the years her life has number'd,
Ev'n nine long years has dragg'd a trembling being,
Beset with pains and perils. Give her peace;
And, to endear it more, be that blest peace
Won by her brother's sword. Oh bless his arm,
And bless his valiant followers—One—and all.

Eli. [*entering armed.*] Hear, Heav'n! and let this pure
and virgin prayer
Plead ev'n for Elidurus, whose sad soul
Cannot look up to your immortal thrones,
And urge his own request: else would he ask,
That all the dangers of the approaching fight
Might fall on him alone; that every spear
The Romans wield might at his breast be aim'd;
Each arrow darted on his rattling helm;
That so the brother of this beauteous maid,
Returning safe with victory and peace,
Might bear them to her bosom.

Mod. Now rise all,
And Heav'n, that knows, what most ye ought to ask,
Grant all ye ought to have. Behold, the stars
Are faded; universal darkness reigns.
Now is the dreadful hour, now will our torches
Glare with more livid horror, now our shrieks
And clanking arms will more appall the foe.
But heed, ye Bards, that for the sign of onset,
Ye sound the antientest of all your rhymes,
Whose birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd
Its lofty strains: the force of that high air
Did Julius feel, when, fir'd by it, our fathers
First drove him recreant to his ships; 'and ill
' Had far'd his second landing, but that fate
' Silenc'd the master Bard, who led the song.'

Now forth, brave Pair! Go, with our blessing go;
Mute be the march, as ye ascend the hill:
Then, when ye hear the sound of our shrill trumpet,
Fall on the foe.

Car. And glory be thy guide;
Pride of my soul, go forth and conquer.

Eve. Brother,
Yet one embrace. O thou much honour'd stranger,
I charge thee fight by my dear brother's side,
And shield him from the foe; for he is brave,
And will with bold and well-directed arm
Return thy succour. [*Exeunt Arviragus and Elidurus.*]

Mod. Now, ye Priests, with speed
Strew on the altar's height your sacred leaves,
And light the morning flame. But why is this?
Why doth our brother Mador snatch his harp
From yonder bough? Why this way bend his step?

Car. He is entranc'd. The fillet bursts that bound
His liberal locks; his snowy vestments fall
In ampler folds; and all his floating form
Doth seem to glisten with divinity!
Yet is he speechless. Say, thou Chief of Bards,
What is there in this airy vacancy,
That thou with fiery and irregular glance
Should'st scan thus wildly? Wherefore heaves thy breast?
Why starts——

ODE.

MADOR.

Hark!

[*Symphony behind the scenes.*]

Hark!

[*Symphony louder.*]

Hark!

[*Full Symphony.*]

Hark ! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
 That shook the earth with thund'ring tread ?
 'Twas Death.—In haste
 The warrior past ;
 High tower'd his helmed head :
 I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,
 I 'spy'd the sparkling of his spear,
 I saw his giant arm the falchion wield ;
 Wide wav'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.
 On me (he cry'd) my Britons, wait,
 To lead you to the field of fate
 I come : Yon car,
 That cleaves the air,
 Descends to throne my state :
 I mount your Champion and your God.
 My proud steeds neigh beneath the thong :
 Hark ! to my wheels of brass, that rattle loud !
 Hark ! to my clarion shrill, that brays the woods among ?

FULL CHORUS.

“ He mounts our Champion and our God.
 “ His proud steeds neigh beneath the thong :
 “ Hark ! to his wheels of brass, that rattle loud !
 “ Hark ! to his clarion shrill, that brays the woods among.”
[Here one of the Druids blows the sacred trumpet.]

MADOR.

Fear not now the fever's fire,
 Fear not now the death-bed groan,
 Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
 Bed-rid age with feeble moan :
 These domestic terrors wait
 Hourly at my palace gate ;

And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,
 These on the tyrant king and coward slave,
 Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to their grave.

But ye, my sons, at this high hour
 Shall share the fullness of my pow'r :

From all your bows,

In levell'd rows,

My own dread shafts shall shower.

Go then to conquest, gladly go,

Deal forth my dole of destiny,

With all my fury dash the trembling foe

Down to those darksome dens, where Rome's pale spectres
 lie ;

Where creeps the nine-fold stream profound

Her black inexorable round,

And on the bank,

To willows dank,

The shivering ghosts are bound.

Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell

To full-orb'd pride, and fading die,

Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell :

Nor such the meed that crowns the sons of Liberty.

No, my Britons ! battle-slain,

Rapture gilds your parting hour :

I, that all despotic reign,

Claim but there a moment's power.

Swiftly the soul of British flame

Animates some kindred frame,

Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,

Exults again in martial ecstacies,

Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

FULL CHORUS.

“ The godlike soul of British flame
“ Animates some kindred frame,
“ Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
“ Exults again in martial ecstacies,
“ Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.”

Exeunt.

ACT V. SCENE I.

CARACTACUS *enters hastily, but with-held by MODRED and the CHORUS.*

Caractacus.

DRUID, with-hold me not. The thundering voice
Still rolls around my ear. Death calls to arms—
Hark! Hark! he calls again! Champion, lead on,
I follow; give me way, my soul is British;
Does he not say unconquer'd, undismay'd,
The British soul revives? Yes, some blest shaft
Shall rid me of this clog of cumb'rous age;
And I again shall in some happier mould
Rise to redeem my country.

Mod. Stay thee, Prince,
And mark what clear and amber-skirted clouds
Rise from the altar's verge, and cleave the skies:
Oh 'tis a prosperous omen! Soon expect
To hear glad tidings.

Car. I will send them to thee.

Mod. But see, a Bard approaches, and he bears them:
Else is his eye no herald to his heart.

SCENE II.

BARD, MODRED, CARACTACUS, CHORUS.

Car. Speedily tell thy tale.

Bard. A tale like mine,

I trust, your ears will willingly pursue
Thro' each glad circumstance. First, Monarch, learn,
The Roman troop is fled.

Mod. Great Gods, we thank ye!

Car. Fought they not ere they fled? Oh tell me all.

Bard. Silent, as night, that wrapt us in her veil,
We pac'd up yonder hill, ' whose woody ridge
' O'erhung the ambush'd foe. No sound was heard,
' Step felt, or sight descry'd;' for safely hid
Beneath the purple pall of sacrifice
Did sleep our holy fire, nor saw the air,
Till to that pass we came, where whilom Brute
Planted his five hoar altars. To our rites
Then swift we hasted, and in one short moment
Each rocky pile was cloth'd with livid flame.
Near each a white-rob'd Druid, whose stern voice
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.
Now wak'd our horrid symphony, now all
Our harps terrific rang: meanwhile the grove
Trembled, the altars shook, and thro' our ranks
Our sacred sisters rush'd in sable robes,
With hair dishevel'd and funeral brands,
Hurl'd round with menacing fury. On they rush'd
In fierce and frantic mood, as is their wont
Amid the magic rites they do to Night

In their deep dens below. Motions like these
Were never dar'd before in open air!

Mod. Did I not say we had a power within us,
That might appal ev'n Romans?

Bard. And it did.

'They stood aghast, and to our vollied darts,
' That thick as hail fell on their helms and corslets,'
Scarce rais'd a warding shield. The sacred trumpet
Then rent the air, and instant at the signal
Rush'd down Arviragus with all our vassals;
A hot, but short-liv'd, conflict then ensued:
For soon they fled. I saw the Romans fly,
Before I left the field.

Car. My son pursued?

Bard. The Prince and Elidurus, like twin lions,
Did side by side engage. Death seem'd to guide
Their swords, no stroke fell fruitless, every wound
Gave him a victim.

Car. ' Thus my friend Ebrancus!

' Ill-fated Prince! didst thou and I in youth
' Unite our valours. In his prime he fell,
' On Conway's banks. I saw him fall, and slew
' His murderer.—But ' how far did they pursue?

Bard. Ev'n to the ships: for I descry'd the rout,
Far as the twilight gleam would aid my sight.

Car. Now, thanks to the bright star that rul'd his birth;
Yes, he will soon return to claim my blessing,
And he shall have it pour'd in tears of joy
On his bold breast!—Methought I heard a step:
Is it not his?

Bard. 'Tis some of our own train,
And, as I think, they lead six Romans captive.

SCENE III.

MODRED, CARACTACUS, CAPTIVES, CHORUS.

Mod. My brethren, bear the prisoners to the cavern,
'Till we demand them.'

Car. 'Pause ye yet awhile.

'They seem of bold demeanor, and have helms
'That speak them leaders. Hear me, Romans, hear.
'That you are captives, is the chance of war :
'Yet captives as ye are, in Britain's eye
'You are not slaves. Barbarians tho' you call us,
'We know the native rights man claims from man,
'And therefore never shall we gall your necks
'With chains, or drag you at our scythed cars
'In arrogance of triumph. Nor, till taught
'By Rome (what Britain sure should scorn to learn)
'Her avarice, will we barter ye for gold.
'True, ye are captives, and our country's safety
'Forbids we give you back to liberty :
'We give you therefore to the immortal Gods,
'To them we lift ye in the radiant cloud
'Of sacrifice. They may in limbs of freedom
'Replace your free-born souls, and their high mercy
'Haply shall to some better world advance you ;
'Or else in this restore that golden gift,
'Which lost, leaves life a burden. Does there breathe
'A wretch so pall'd with the vain fear of death,
'Can call this cruelty ? 'tis love, 'tis mercy.
'And grant, ye Gods, if e'er I'm made a captive
'I meet the like fair treatment from the foe,
'Whose stronger star quells mine. Now lead them on,
'And,' while they live, treat them as men should men,

And not as Rome treats Britain.

[*Exeunt Captives.*]

‘ Druid, these,

‘ Ev’n should their chief escape, may blaze to-morrow

‘ Our gatitute—Whence was that shriek?’

SCENE IV.

EVELINA, CARACTACUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

Eve. My father,

Support me, take me trembling to your arms;

All is not well. Ah me, my fears o’ercome me!

Car. What means my child?

Eve. Alas! we are betray’d.

Ev’n now, as wand’ring in yon eastern grove

I call’d the Gods to aid us, the dread sound

Of many hasty steps did meet mine ear:

This way they prest.

Car. Daughter, thy fears are vain.

Eve. Methought I saw the flame of lighted brands,

And what did glitter to my dazzled sight,

Like swords and helms.

Car. All, all the feeble coinage

Of maiden fear.

Eve. Nay, if mine ear mistook not,

I heard the traitor’s voice, who that way ’scap’d,

Calling to arms.

Car. Away with idle terrors!

Know, thy brave brother’s crest is crown’d with conquest,

The Romans fled, their leaders are our captives.

Smile, my lov’d child, and imitate the sun,

That rises ruddy from behind yon oaks

To hail him victor.

Mod. That the rising sun!
O horror! horror! sacrilegious fires
Devour our groves: they blaze, they blaze! O sound
The trump again; recall the Prince, or all
Is lost.

Car. Druid, where is thy fortitude?
Do not I live? Is not this holy sword
Firm in my grasp? I will preserve your groves.
Britons, I go: let those that dare die nobly,
Follow my step. [Exit Caractacus.]

Eve. Oh whither does he go?
Return, return! Ye holy men, recall him.
What is his arm against a host of Romans?
Oh I have lost a father!

Mod. Ruthless Gods!
Ye take away our souls: a general panic
Reigns thro' the grove. Oh fly, my brethren, fly,
To aid the king, fly to preserve your altars!—
Alas! 'tis all in vain; our fate is fixt.
Look there, look there, thou miserable maid!
Behold thy bleeding brother.

SCENE V.

ARVIRAGUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA, MODRED, CHORUS.

Arv. Thanks, good youth:
Safe hast thou brought me to that holy spot
Where I did wish to die. 'Support me still,
'Oh, I am sick to death. Yet one step more:
'Now lay me gently down.' I would drag out
This life, tho' at some cost of throbs and pangs,
Just long enough to claim my father's blessing,

And sigh my last breath in my sister's arms.

—And here she kneels, poor maid! all dumb with grief.
Restrain thy sorrow, gentlest Evelina!

True, thou dost see me bleed: I bleed to death.

Eve. Say'st thou to death? O Gods! the barbed shaft
Is buried in his breast. Yes, he must die;
And I, alas! am doom'd to see him die.
Where are your healing arts, medicinal herbs,
Ye holy men, your wonder-working spells?
Pluck me but out this shaft, stanch but this blood,
And I will call down blessings on your heads
With such a fervency—And can you not!
Then let me beg you on my bended knee,
Give to my misery some opiate drug,
May shut up all my senses.—Yes, good fathers,
Mingle the potion so, that it may kill me
Just at the instant this poor languisher
Heaves his last sigh.

Arv. Talk not thus wildly, sister,
Think on our father's age.—

Eve. Alas! my brother!
We have no father now; or if we have,
He is a captive.

Arv. Captive! Oh my wound!
It stings me now.—But is it so? [Turning to Modred.

Mod. Alas!

We know no more, save that he sallied single
To meet the foe, whose unexpected host
Round by the east had wound their fraudulent march,
And fir'd our groves.

Eli. O fatal, fatal valour!
Then is he seiz'd, or slain.

Arv. Too sure he is!

Druid, not half the Romans met our swords ;
We found the fraud too late : the rest are yonder.

Mod. How could they gain the pass ?

Arv. The wretch, that fled
That way, return'd, conducting half their powers ;
And—But thy pardon, youth, I will not wound thee,
He is thy brother.

Eli. Thus my honest sword
Shall force the blood from the detested heart
That holds alliance with him.

Arv. Elidurus,
Hold, on our friendship, hold. Thou, noble youth,
Look on this innocent maid. She must to Rome,
Captive to Rome. Thou seest warm life flow from me,
Ere long she'll have no brother. Heav'n's my witness,
I do not wish that thou should'st live the slave
Of Rome : but yet she is my sister.

Eli. Prince,
Thou urgest that, might make me drag an age
In fetters worse than Roman. I will live,
And while I live——

SCENE VI.

BARD enters.

Bard. Fly to your caverns, Druids,
The grove's beset around. The chief approaches.

Mod. Let him approach, we will confront his pride,
The seer that rules amid the groves of Mona
Has not to fear his fury. What tho' age
Slackens our sinews ; what tho' shield and sword

Give not their iron aid to guard our body ;
Yet virtue arms our soul, and 'gainst that panoply
What 'vails the rage of robbers. Let him come.

Arv. I faint apace.—Ye venerable men,
If ye can save this body from pollution,
If ye can tomb me in this sacred place,
I trust ye will. I fought to save these groves,
And, fruitless tho' I fought, some grateful oak,
I trust, will spread its reverential gloom
O'er my pale ashes.—Ah ! that pang was death !
My sister, Oh !——

[Dies.

Eli. She faints ! Ah raise her !——

Eve. Yes,

Now he is dead. I felt his spirit go
In a cold sigh, and as it past, methought
It paus'd a while, and trembled on my lips !
Take me not from him : breathless as he is,
He is my brother still, and if the Gods
Do please to grace him with some happier being,
They ne'er can give to him a fonder sister.

Mod. Brethren, surround the corse, and, ere the foe
Approaches, chaunt with meet solemnity
That grateful dirge your dying champion claims.

[Symphony.

Mad. Lo, where incumbent o'er the shade
Rome's rav'ning eagle bows her beaked head !
Yet while a moment fate affords ;
While yet a moment freedom stays ;
That moment, which outweighs
Eternity's unmeasur'd boards,
Shall Mona's grateful Bards employ
To hymn their godlike hero to the sky.

SECOND BARD.

AIR.

“ Radiant Ruler of the day !
 “ Pause upon thy orb sublime,
 “ Bid this awful moment stay,
 “ Bind it on the brow of time ;
 “ While Mona’s trembling echoes sigh
 “ To strains that trill when heroes die.”

FOURTH BARD.

AIR.

“ Hear our harps, in accents slow,
 “ Breathe the dignity of woe,
 “ Solemn notes that pant, and pause,
 “ While the last majestic close,
 “ In diapason deep is drown’d ;
 “ Notes that Mona’s harps should sound.”

THIRD BARD.

AIR.

“ See our tears, in sober shower,
 “ O’er this shrine of glory pour ;
 “ Holy tears, by Virtue shed,
 “ That embalm the valiant dead ;
 “ In these our sacred song we steep,
 “ Tears that Mona’s Bards should weep.”

TRIO.

“ Radiant Ruler! hear us call
 “ Blessings on the godlike youth,
 “ Who dar’d to fight, who dar’d to fall,
 “ For Britain, Freedom, and for Truth.

“ His dying groan, his parting sigh,
 “ Was music for the Gods on high;
 “ ’Twas Valour’s hymn to Liberty.”

MADOR.

Ring out ye mortal strings!
 Answer thou heav’nly harp instinct with spirit all,
 That o’er Andrastes’ throne self-warbling swings:
 There, where ten thousand spheres, in measur’d chime,
 Roll their majestic melodies along,
 Thou guid’st the thundering song,
 Pois’d on thy jasper arch sublime.
 Yet shall thy heav’nly accents deign
 To mingle with our mortal strain,
 And Heav’n and Earth unite, in chorus high,
 While Freedom wafts her champion to the sky.

FULL CHORUS.

“ Andrastes’ heav’nly harp shall deign
 “ To mingle with our mortal strain,
 “ And Heav’n and Earth unite, in chorus high,
 “ While Freedom wafts her champion to the sky.”

SCENE VII.

AULUS DIDIUS, MODRED, EVELINA, ELIDURUS,
 CHORUS.

Aul. Did. Ye bloody priests,
 Behold we burst on your infernal rites,
 And bid you pause. Instant restore our soldiers,
 Nor hope that Superstition’s ruthless step
 Shall wade in Roman gore. Ye savage men,
 Did not our laws give licence to all faiths,

We would o'erturn your altars, headlong heave
These shapeless symbols of your barbarous Gods,
And let the golden sun into your caves.

Mod. Servant of Cæsar, has thine impious tongue
Spent the black venom of its blasphemy?
It has: then take our curses on thy head,
Ev'n his fell curses, who doth reign in Mona
Vicegerent of those Gods thy pride insults.

Aul. Did. Bold priest, I scorn thy curses and thyself.
Soldiers, go search the caves, and free the prisoners:
Take heed ye seize Caractacus alive.
Arrest yon youth; load him with heaviest irons;
He shall to Cæsar answer for his crime.

Eli. I stand prepar'd to triumph in my crime.

Aul. Did. 'Tis well, proud boy.——

Look to the beauteous maid, [To the soldiers.
That tranc'd in grief bends o'er yon bleeding corse,
Respect her sorrows.

Eve. Hence, ye barbarous men,
Ye shall not take him welt'ring thus in blood,
To shew at Rome what British virtue was.
Avaunt! The breathless body that ye touch
Was once Arviragus!

Aul. Did. Fear us not, Princess,
We reverence the dead.

Mod. Would too to heav'n
Ye reverenc'd the Gods but ev'n enough
Not to debase with slavery's cruel chain,
What they created free.

Aul. Did. The Romans fight
Not to enslave, but humanize the world.

Mod. Go to, we will not parley with thee, Roman:
Instant pronounce our doom.

Aul. Did. Hear it, and thank us:

This once our clemency shall spare your groves,
If at our call ye yield the British king:
Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Cæsar,
That each old oak, whose solemn gloom ye boast,
Shall bow beneath our axes.

Mod. Be they blasted

Whene'er their shade forgets to shelter virtue.

SCENE VIII.

BARD enters.

Bard. Mourn, Mona, mourn. Caractacus is captive!
And dost thou smile, false Roman? Do not think
He fell an easy prey. Know, ere he yielded,
Thy bravest veterans bled. He too, thy spy,
The base Brigantian prince, hath seal'd his fraud
With death. Bursting thro' armed ranks, that hemm'd
The caitiff round, the brave Caractacus
Seiz'd his false throat; and as he gave him death
Indignant thunder'd, *Thus is my last stroke,*
The stroke of justice. Numbers then oppress him:
I saw the slave, that cowardly behind
Pinion'd his arms; I saw the sacred sword
Writh'd from his grasp; I saw, what now ye see,
Inglorious sight! those barbarous bonds upon him.

SCENE IX.

CARACTACUS, AULUS DIDIUS, MODRED, CHORUS, &c.

Car. Romans, methinks the malice of your tyrant
Might furnish heavier chains. Old as I am,

‘ And wither’d as ye see these war-worn limbs,’
Trust me, they shall support the weightiest load
Injustice dares impose——

Proud-crested soldier !

[*To Didius.*

‘ Who seem’st the master-mover in this business,’
Say, dost thou read less terror on my brow
Than when thou met’st me in the fields of war,
Heading my nations ? No ; my free-born soul
Has scorn still left to sparkle thro’ these eyes,
And frown defiance on thee.—Is it thus !

[*Seeing his son’s body.*

Then I’m indeed a captive. Mighty Gods !
My soul, my soul submits : patient it bears
The pond’rous load of grief ye heap upon it.
Yes, it will grovel in this shatter’d breast,
And be the sad tame thing it ought to be,
Coopt in a servile body.

Aul. Did. Droop not, King.

When Claudius, the great master of the world,
Shall hear the noble story of thy valour,
His pity——

Car. Can a Roman pity, soldier ?

And if he can, Gods ! must a Briton bear it ?
Arviragus, my bold, my breathless boy,
Thou hast escap’d such pity : thou art free.
Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs
Rest in a noble grave ; posterity
Shall to thy tomb with annual reverence bring
Sepulchral stones, and pile them to the clouds :
Whilst mine——

Aul. Did. The morn doth hasten our departure.

Prepare thee, King, to go : a fav’ring gale
Now swells our sails.

Car. Inhuman that thou art!

Dost thou deny a moment for a father
To shed a few warm tears o'er his dead son?
I tell thee, chief, this act might claim a life
To do it duly; 'even a longer life,
'Than sorrow ever suffer'd.' Cruel man!
And thou deniest me moments. Be it so.
I know you Romans weep not for your children;
Ye triumph o'er your tears, and think it valour:
I triumph in my tears. Yes, best-lov'd boy,
Yes, I can weep, 'can fall upon thy corse,
'And I can tear my hairs, these few grey hairs,
The only honours war and age have left me.
Ah! son, thou might'st have rul'd o'er many nations,
As did thy royal ancestry: but I,
Rash that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb,
Discretion hangs on brav'ry: else perchance
These men, that fasten fetters on thy father,
Had sued to him for peace, and claim'd his friendship.

Aul. Did. But thou wast still implacable to Rome,
And scorn'd her friendship.

Car. [*Starting up from the body.*] Soldier, I had arms,
Had neighing steeds to whirl my iron cars,
Had wealth, dominion. Dost thou wonder, Roman,
I fought to save them? What if Cæsar aims
To lord it universal o'er the world,
Shall the world tamely crouch at Cæsar's footstool?

Aul. Did. Read in thy fate our answer. Yet if sooner
Thy pride had yielded.——

Car. Thank thy Gods, I did not.
Had it been so, the glory of thy master,
Like my misfortunes, had been short and trivial,
Oblivion's ready prey: now, after struggling

Nine years, and that right bravely, 'gainst a tyrant,
 I am his slave to treat as seems him good :
 If cruelly, 'twill be an easy task
 To bow a wretch, alas ! how bow'd already !
 Down to the dust : if well, his clemency,
 ' When trick'd and varnish'd by your glossing penmen,'
 May shine in honour's annals, and adorn
 Himself ; it boots not me. Look there ! look there !
 The slave that shot that dart, kill'd ev'ry hope
 Of lost Caractacus ! Arise, my daughter.
 Alas ! poor Prince ! art thou too in vile fetters ?

[To Elidurus.

Come hither, youth : be thou to me a son,
 To her a brother. Thus with trembling arms
 I lead you forth : Children, we go to Rome.
 Weep'st thou, my girl ? I pr'ythee, hoard thy tears
 For the sad meeting of thy captive mother :
 For we have much to tell her, much to say
 ' Of these good men, who nurtur'd us in Mona ;
 ' Much of the fraud and malice that pursued us ;
 ' Much of her son, who pour'd his precious blood
 ' To save his sire and sister.' Think'st thou, maid,
 Her gentleness can hear that tale, and live ?

[Pointing to his dead son.

And yet she must. Oh Gods, I grow a talker !
 Grief and old age are ever full of words :
 But I'll be mute. Adieu ! ye holy men ;
 Yet one look more.—Now lead us hence for ever.

A Dead March.

*During which CARACTACUS, EVELINA, and ELIDURUS
 are led off by ROMANS.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE few following quotations, from ancient authors, are here thrown together, in order to support and explain some passages in the Drama, that respect the manners of the Druids; and which the general account of their customs, to be found in our histories of Britain, does not include.

Page 10.

“ On the left

“ Reside the * sages skill'd in nature's lore :”

* *i. e.* The Euvates; one of the three classes of the Druids, according to Am. Marcellinus. ‘ *Studia liberalium doctrinarum inchoata per Bardos, Euvates, & Druidas.*’ This class, Strabo tells us, had the care of the sacrifices, and studied natural philosophy; which here, by *the changeful universe*, is shewn to be on Pythagorean principles. Whenever the *Priests* are mentioned in the subsequent parts of the Drama, this order of men is intended to be meant, as distinguished from the Druids and Bards.

Page 3.

“ Thou shalt live ;

“ Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,

“ All rights of nature cancell'd.”

Alluding to the Druidical power of excommunication mentioned by Cæsar. ‘ *Si quis aut privatus, aut publicus, eorum decreto non stetit, sacrificiis interdicunt. Hæc pœna apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac sceleratorum habentur—neque iis pe-*

tentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullus communicatur.' Cæs.
Comment. lib. vi.

Page 16.

"Are the milk-white steers prepar'd?"

In the minute description which Pliny gives us of the ceremony of gathering the mistletoe, he tells us, they sacrificed two white bulls. See Pliny's Natural History, l. xvi. c. 44, which Drayton, in his Polyolbion, thus versifies :

' Sometimes within my shades, in many an ancient wood,
Whose often-twined tops great Phœbus' fires withstood,
The fearless British priests, under an aged oak,
Taking a milk-white bull, unstrained with the yoke,
And with an axe of gold, from that Jove-sacred tree,
The mistletoe, cut down ; then, with a bended knee
On th' unhew'd altar laid, put to the hallow'd fires ;
And whilst in the sharp flame the trembling flesh expires,
As their strong fury mov'd (when all the rest adore)
Pronouncing their desires the sacrifice before,
Up to th' eternal heav'n their bloodied hands did rear :
And whilst the murm'ring woods ev'n shudder'd as with fear,
Preach'd to the beardless youth the soul's immortal state ;
To other bodies still how it should transmigrate,
That to contempt of death them strongly did excite.'

Ninth Song.'

Page 17.

"Where our matron sister dwells."

The existence of female Druids seems ascertained by Tacitus, in his description of the final destruction of Mona by Paulinus Suetonius. ' Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque *intercursantibus fœminis.*' &c. Also by the known story of Dioclesian, on which Fletcher formed a play, called the Prophetess.

Page 17.

“ And the potent adder-stone.”

The ovum anguinum, or serpent's egg ; a famous Druidical amulet, thus circumstantially described by Pliny.—‘ Præterea est ovorum genus in magna Galliarum fama, omissum Græcis. Angues innumeri æstate convoluti, salivis faucium corporumque spumis artifice complexu glomerantur ; anguinum appellatur. Druidæ sibilis id dicunt in sublime jactari, sagoque oportere intercipi, ne tellurem attingat. Profugere raptorem equo, serpentes enim insequi, donec arceantur amnis alicujus interventu,’ &c. Nat. Hist. lib. xxix. cap. 3.

There are remains of this superstition still, both in the northern and western parts of our island. For Lhwyd, the author of the *Archeologia*, writes thus to Rowland ; (see *Mona Antiqua*, p. 338 :) ‘ The Druid doctrine about the *Glain Neidr* obtains very much through all Scotland, as well Lowlands as Highlands ; but there is not a word of it in this kingdom (Ireland) ; where, as there are no snakes, they could not propagate it. Besides snake-stones, the Highlanders have their snail-stones, paddock-stones, &c. to all which they attribute their several virtues, and wear them as amulets.’ And in another letter he writes, ‘ The Cornish retain variety of charms, and have still, towards the Land's-end, the amulet of Maen Magal and Glain Neidr, which latter they call a Milpreu, or Melpreu, and have a charm for the snake to make it, when they have found one asleep, and struck a hazel wand in the centre of her spires.’

Page 31.

“ Have the milk white steeds

“ Unrein'd, and, neighing, pranc'd with fav'ring steps.”

The few and imperfect accounts antiquity gives us of ce-

remonies, &c. which are unquestionably Druidical, makes it necessary in this, and in other places of the Drama, to have recourse to Tacitus's account of the Germans, amongst whom, if there were really no established Druids, there was certainly a great correspondency, in religious opinions, with the Gauls and Britons. The passage here alluded to is taken from his 10th chapter. '*Proprium gentis, equorumque quoque præsagia ac monitus experiri. Publice aluntur iisdem nemoribus ac lucis, candidi & nullo mortali opere contacti, quos pressos sacro curru, sacerdos ac rex, vel princeps civitatis comitantur, hinnitus & fremitus observans, nec ulli auspicio major fides non solum apud plebem, sed apud proceres, apud sacerdotes.*'

Page 32.

"Thou art a king, a sov'reign o'er frail man:

"I am a Druid, servant of the Gods.

"Such service is above such sovereignty."

The supreme authority of the Druids over their king is ascertained by Dion. Chrysostom. Helmodus, also, de Slavis, l. ii. c. 12. asserts, '*Rex apud eos modicæ est æstimationis in comparatione flaminis.*'

Page 33.

"The time shall come, when destiny and death.

"Thron'd in a burning car."

Strabo, and other writers, tell us, the Druids taught, that the world was finally to be destroyed by fire; upon which this allegory is founded.

Page 39.

"The gods, my brethren,

"Inspire these scruples; oft to female softness,

"Oft to the purity of virgin souls,

"Doth Heav'n its voluntary light dispense."

‘Inesse enim sanctum quid & providum fœminis putant. Nec aut consilia ipsorum aspernantur, aut responsa negant.’ Tac. de Morib. Germ. and Strabo to the like purpose, l. vii.

Page 43.

“Behold yon huge

“And unhewn sphere of living adamant.”

This is intended to describe the rocking stone, of which there are several still to be seen in Wales, Cornwall, and Derbyshire. They are universally thought, by antiquarians, to be Druidical monuments; and Mr. Toland thinks, ‘that the Druids made the people believe, that they only could move them, and that by a miracle, by which they condemned or acquitted the accused, and often brought criminals to confess what could in no other way be extorted from them.’ It was this conjecture which gave the hint for this piece of machinery. The reader may find a description of one of these rocking stones in Camden’s Britannia, in his account of Pembrokeshire; and also several in Borlase’s History of Cornwall.

Page 65.

—————“And its name

“TRIFINGUS.”

The name of the enchanted sword in the Hervarer Saga.

Page 66.

“By the bright circle of the golden sun.”

This adjuration is taken from the literal form of the old Druidical oath, which they administered to their disciples; and which the learned Selden, in Prolog. de Diis Syr. gives us from Vettius Valens Antiochenus, l. vii.

Page 73.

“Near each a white-rob’d Druid, whose stern voice
 “Thunder’d deep execrations on the foe.”

This account is taken from what history tells us did really happen some years after, when the groves of Mona were destroyed by Suetonius Paulinus. ‘Igitur Monam insulam incolis validam, & receptaculum perfuragum aggredi parat, navesque fabricatur plano alveo, adversus breve litus & incertum. Sic Pedes; equites vado secuti, aut altiores inter undas, adnantes equis transmisere.’ Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque, intercursantibus fœminis: in modam Furiarum, veste ferali crinibus dejectis *faces* præferebant. Druidæ circum, preces diras sublatis ad cœlum manibus fundentes, novitate aspectus perculere milites ut quasi hærentibus membris, immobile corpus vulneribus præberent. Dein cohortationibus ducis, & se ipsi stimulantés ne muliebre & fanaticum agmen pavescerent, inferunt signa, sternuntque obvios & igni suo involvunt.’ Tac. Ann. l. xiv. c. 29.

Page 83.

“These shapeless symbols of your barbarous Gods.”

The Druids did not really worship the Divinity under any symbol. But this is put intentionally into the mouth of the Roman, as mistaking the rude stones placed round the groves for idols. Thus Lucan, in his beautiful description of a Druid grove,

————— ‘*simulacraque mœsta Deorum*
Arte carent cæsisque extant informia truncis.’

Phar. lib. iii.

Some imagery from the same description is also borrowed in the opening of the Drama.

Page 86.

"Soldier, I had arms."

This passage, and some others in this scene, are taken from Caractacus's famous speech in Tacitus, before the throne of Claudius: but here adapted to his dramatic character.

7 JUL 52

